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FATAL REVENGE ;

OR,

THE FAMILY OF MONTORIO.

A Romance.

BY DENNIS JASPER MURPHY.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

Ἐβούλεμην δὲ ἂν πόλεις καὶ ὄρη αὐτὰ μόνον, ὥσπερ ἐν γραφαῖς ὁρᾶν,
ἀλλὰ τὴν ἀνθρώπου αὐτῶς, καὶ ἃ πράττεισι, καὶ ὅσα λέγουσι.

LUCIAN, Ἐπισκοπεῖντες.

I wished not merely to see cities and woods as one can see them in maps
but men, and what they do, and what they say.

VOL. III.

LONDON :

PRINTED FOR LONGMAN, HURST, REES, AND ORME,
PATERNOSTER ROW.

1807.

FATAL REVENGE

THE FAMILY OF MONTORIO

A NOVEL

BY DENNIS JASPER MURPHY

IN THREE VOLUMES

Printed by G. Woodfall,
Paternoster-row.

1807

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FATAL REVENGE;

OR,

THE FAMILY OF MONTORIO.

CHAP. I.

THE evening was dark and gloomy, Angellini and the principal inquisitor were seated over a dim fire of wood embers, in a remote part of that vast structure, it was a lone detached turret, against which the dark waves of the autumnal sea were tossing. They talked of disastrous tales, of events known only to the agents of the Inquisition, such as made their prisons seem the abode of more crimes and miseries than the day ever looked on, when the inquisitor

requested Angellini again to repeat to him the extraordinary circumstances of the confession of Montorio. “ I have not,” said Angellini “ all the papers in this closet, but *one single perusal* of them has made so deep an impression on me, that I can easily continue the narrative, where the manuscript is deficient.” They examined and secured the doors, and Angellini depressing his voice, proceeded thus :—

* * * * *

It was about the middle of last summer, that Count Ippolito was returning from an evening excursion on the shore of Naples. He arrived at his palace, and was about to enter the portico, when a stranger, whose figure and aspect were concealed by the swiftness of his motion, said to him in a low voice, “ Signor, has your *nativity ever been calculated?*” Ippolito started, —the inquisitor was out of sight. The servants declared they had seen no form,

and heard no voice. Most would have regarded or remembered this circumstance, as merely exciting temporary surprise or curiosity; but the words of the figure contained an appeal to Ippolito's favourite science, and that appeal was irresistible. That evening he was engaged to an assembly at the Alberotti palace; the images of expected gaiety, had almost banished other musings, and he was ascending the steps of the palace, when he was entangled in a dispute between two cavaliers. In the crowd, he observed a person who stood without any motion or share in the disturbance. Ippolito's eye was fixed on him by this circumstance, and a moment's glance of his quick eye discovered the person who had that night addressed him. He turned eagerly on him; but the stranger, anticipating the movement, turned on *him*, whispered, "Signor, remember my question," and was lost in the crowd. At

the assembly, Montorio was absent and dejected—he quitted it early, and returned home. The door of the carriage, in which Montorio was leaning back musingly, was thrown open by the servants, who were bowing with Italian obsequiousness as they waited for him to alight, when a face was suddenly thrust in at the opposite side, and that voice, of which the first sound could never be forgotten, repeated, “Signor, answer my question.” Then Ippolito, alarmed and incensed, sprung from his carriage, and calling to his domestics, endeavoured to pursue his tormentor. Every direction was explored in vain. The unknown appeared to have communion with the powers of earth or air, and to be aided by them in his movements. Montorio, on his return to the palace, gave signs of that perturbation and alarm which had so *terrified his page*, who had not accompanied him.—(Of this young person,

person, Montorio speaks with strong affection; what may be his endowments and virtues, I know not; but their friendship is as tender as that of brothers, and among his own calamities, Montorio enumerates the distress of his page for his disastrous fate.)

His perturbation, however, proceeded not from fear, but from disappointment and curiosity; disappointment, which had even mortified his pride; and curiosity, whose pampered appetite had met its first repulse. That day was spent in vain search, at night he found the following billet on his table:—"Montorio, do you remember the person who questioned you last night? are you interested in the inquiry he made? would you venture to know and to explore it? Then meet him, but meet him without mistrust or futile preparations, in the church of San Piero, in the north aisle, behind the fourth pillar from the confessional, when

when vespers are over, and the congregation dispersing. You may see him if you will; you may confer with him if you dare." The letter was anonymous, and the hand unknown. Whether Montorio would have neglected the appeal it contained to his curiosity, that, in the last line, to his courage, was peremptory; and he repaired to vespers with the mingled satisfaction of feeding his curiosity, and exerting his fortitude. The church was lonely and remote—he dismissed his attendants, and paced the aisle almost in solitude,—the service was nearly over;—through a narrow door he caught a view of the service, and of the priests as they bowed round the high altar with the imposing solemnity of public worship:—a pause followed—and the organ burst forth, accompanied with the loud and deep chauntings of the monks, and mingled with them came the toll of a bell that called them to service in another part of
the

the convent. Ippolito listened, touched and subdued ; but endeavouring to shake off an impression which he felt to be merely local, he examined the congregation as they dispersed, and from time to time turned to the pillar, toward which he momentarily expected some one of them to glide. No one approached it, all had departed, and to the noise and stir of their departure had succeeded the solitary passing steps of the monks and attendants of the church. Vexed and impatient, Ippolito again turned to the pillar, and thought he could observe a deeper shade than it had before projected round its base. He advanced—a figure stood in the shade erect, motionless, and almost appearing a part of the column. Amid the joy of this discovery, Montorio could not avoid recollecting, that no person, since his entering the aisle, had visibly approached that spot. He advanced, purposing to address the figure,

figure, but its unmoved and utter stillness repelled him. He passed close to it, and fixed his eyes intently on it;—the habit was that of a man, but dark and confused, the stature tall, the face concealed. Montorio passed and repassed him, pausing each time, but without obtaining the smallest notice, or indication that the figure he beheld had sense or life. Convinced, at length, that his silence was stubborn and affected, Montorio making a full stop, addressed him in a low, but resolute tone—“ You have summoned me here; what would you have with me?”—“ Nothing,” replied the figure, in those tones with which, though heard so lately, he was well acquainted. “ Why, then, was I brought here? Do you know aught concerning me?”—“ Every thing,” replied the stranger. “ Speak, then,” said Montorio, “ I am here,” and he rested on his sword. “ I have not power—I am now
as

as other men,—I am weak as a broken wave; but the hour cometh that has in it the force of unutterable things, and I await it awed and still.”—“Why was I then brought here?”—“Like me you must await that hour, like me you must be borne on by it in dreadful submission,—when it arrives you shall hear from me.”—“I will not leave this church unsatisfied,” said Montorio impetuously; “whatever you are, or wizard, or impostor, I will know before I quit you; remember the mockery of last night.” The figure glided away—Ippolito eagerly followed. It entered the confessional, where the prior sat engaged in the holy service of the place, and he determined even to wait its termination, in order to see the stranger again. This resolution his impatience rendered intolerably tedious; he remained in the aisle, counting the moments, and expecting at the lapse of each to see the unknown issue from the confessional, when with astonishment he

beheld departing from it only the prior, who quitted it with the air of a man engaged in solitary prayer. Montorio, in astonishment, now addressed one of the monks who was passing: "Is it usual," said he, "for penitents to remain in the confessional of S. Piero, after the confessor has quitted it?" The monk beheld him with surprise. "I have but now," he eagerly explained, "beheld a person enter the confessional; I waited the end of his confession, and now I see the prior quit his seat alone."—"You are deceived, Cavalier," said the monk; "I myself saw the last penitent this evening quit the confessional, and afterwards the church: it is the devout custom of our superior to continue some time in solitary prayer, after his penitents depart, and this necessarily implies he must have been alone." Montorio, hopeless of giving conviction to the mind of another, while his own was oppressed by perplexity,

perplexity, yet endeavoured to explain what he was assured he had beheld, when the prior, whose attention, as he passed though the aisle, was arrested by his gestures and exclamations, paused, and said, “There is no penitent in the confessional, Cavalier, nor has been since the conclusion of mass.”—“Reverend Father, pardon my impatience,” replied Montorio, “I have reasons for examining this affair—reasons peculiar and important. Immersed as you were in the consideration of divine things, you might not have heard the entrance of him who is now lurking in the confessional; permit it but to be examined, and I shall depart happy, if even convinced and pardoned for my misconceptions.”—“I should not hesitate to reject your petition,” said the prior, “if I thought any person was concealed there, for penitence should be as sacred as devotion; but I comply, because I know there is not.”

The

The door of the inclosure, where the penitent kneels, was then thrown open, and it was empty. Montorio, after some apologies, which his confusion rendered inarticulate, retired, and passed the rest of the evening in fruitless attempts to hide his solicitude from himself by dissipation ; he returned home, perplexed and disappointed : but his visitor had anticipated him. The following letter was on his table :

“ Thou wast not prepared, nor was I, for this night’s meeting. But why seek to pierce my retreat ? When I would be, I am invisible, and where I would be, I am present. I mock at the means and power of man ; I am alone in the world, yet I move in its paths, and mix in its agency. Again, I walk with man side by side, day after day ; yet I am in utter solitude, for no man knows me ; my presence is not seen, but felt ; my motion casts no shadow, but the substance is

is there. From detection and pursuit, I stand aloof in dreadful immunity; pursue me not, therefore, but meet me, when summoned, and when we meet, ask not, but listen. To-morrow, at midnight, there will be a funeral in the church of the convent S. Antonio; be there, and I will appear to thee. Dost thou tremble at the taper and the bell, the corpse and the shroud? If thou canst meet me, fear not to meet the dead."

Ippolito, by this letter, was fully confirmed in his pursuit of this strange being; all the irregular desires which had fed his fancy with temporary food, were now exchanged for a distinct and definite object, whose pursuit interested more feelings than those of curiosity, and whose attainment promised more than their gratification. At midnight he went to the church of S. Antonio; it was the funeral of a person of rank,
many

many of the laity attended with ecclesiastics. The melancholy pomp of midnight worship was deepened by every circumstance which the genius of our church, and the policy of her ministry, apply so successfully to the enthrallment of weak, and the local captivation of even strong minds. The bells tolled at measured intervals; the masses performed at the different altars, mixed their deeper tones with the audible and fervent aspirations of the devotees; the tapers poured a pale and steady light on the tonsured heads, the dark drapery, and the sepulchral faces of the monks; and here and there disclosed a ghostly figure, that knelt and wept before their patron's shrine, while the torches poured a blaze, yellow, and broad, and bickering, on the stronger features of the structure; the dark recesses of the cloisters, the dim imagery of the roof, windows, whose burnished picturings blazed and disappeared

peared in the waving light, and walls obscurely traced with flourishes and inscriptions, the achievements of forgotten worth, and the memorials of departed superstition. Though there was a crowd, no one felt the cheering effect of human presence, each was to himself, solitary and subdued; all communication was in whispers, and even that was involuntarily suspended at the low, tremulous tones of the organ, and the first, faint, distant chaunt of the monks, that rose with it, a flow of solemn and undistinguished sound.

Ippolito, in a remote part of the church, stood with recollected feeling, which the general awe deepened, but did not divide. It was his fate at these meetings to be suddenly encountered by him he was watching to see; for, as he looked around him, he felt his cloak touched by a person, who passed on without speaking. Montorio, with momentary conviction
of

of the identity of the person, followed him. They quitted the church, and traversed many aisles and passages of the convent, with which his silent conductor seemed perfectly acquainted; they seemed to have at length got beyond the reach and sound of the human inmates of those walls; their single and measured steps had succeeded to the deep murmur of the church, and to its illuminated walls the pale and solitary lamp that partly lit the passage, which to Ippolito seemed endless. They now descended several steps, and reached a door, low, and apparently leading to some subterraneous apartment. It opened at the stranger's touch; but Ippolito half receded when he saw the dark stairs beneath, that dimly lit, and, winding beyond his sight, seemed to hold communication with the receptacles of the dead. The stranger beckoned—Ippolito paused;—the stranger beckoned again—
then

then Ippolito spoke with firmness :—

“Whoever you are, wherever you are leading, do not tempt inevitable danger: fraud I will detect, and force I can resist; my arm is as strong as yours, and my sword is by my side.” The stranger turned, and, for the first time, partially uncovering his face, fixed on Montorio a look of melancholy conviction, of which, as of all his looks and movements, the effect was resistless; it seemed to convey a depth of knowledge, and compassion for some foreseen and inevitable evil, such as could be attained or communicated by no creature of limited and earthly powers. Montorio, silently subdued by that look, followed him down the descent, with an obscure but intimate sense of influence that could not be repelled, and of evil that could not be averted: it led to the vaults of the convent. They wandered for some time among those dreary passages in silence, till they

saw

saw a stronger light in the vault than what issued from the damp and misty lamps which twinkled through shade and vapour; it proceeded from torches, which burned in a new opened vault, opened for him whose funeral was celebrated that night; around it stood some assistants, who were waiting for the corpse, and on whose dark habits and rugged visages the torches threw a yellow and smoky glare, that terrified imagination to find a resemblance for. The stranger started from their view, and lighting some concealed preparation at a lamp which hung from the low arch, entered another passage, which, but for that faint light, was utterly dark. Montorio, who had no longer the power of retreating, followed,—the stranger turned;—his aspect was melancholy, but not ghastly; his voice hollow, but not terrible:—he paused;—the echoes of a clock, that struck one, were heard distinctly

tinctly from the cloisters above. “It is the hour,” said the stranger, “and dost thou dread to meet it?” Montorio, whose courage was inflamed by impatience, motioned onward;—they proceeded;—the stranger turned again, and something like human feeling was in his melancholy eye. “Yonder is thy fate, and dost thou shrink to behold it?” The noble disdain that flushed from Ippolito’s eyes was his only answer. They turned a dark angle in the vault, and his conductor, in muffling the lamp he carried, let its light fall on a bier, where lay the body of a man, suspected of murder, but who had died in prison under the terrors of his expected fate. Montorio approached; the event and the person had been known to him; he looked up—he read a dreadful interpretation in the gesture and expression of his companion, who stood over the bier, embodying in his look all we conceive of those instruments, who
are

are said to prompt the crimes they predict; to realize uncertain evil by the suggestions of supposed necessity; to breathe the first thought of blood into the predestined murderer, and lead the devoted mind, through the horrors of anticipated guilt, to the daring abandonment, the convulsive energy, the high wound and horrid pitch of determined distraction. Montorio shivered; the influence of his habitual pursuit became in one moment serious and painful, he endeavoured to wrest his mind from its hold; he could not; and while he yet struggled to reason himself out of involuntary oppression, the light disappeared, and its mysterious bearer was seen no more. Left in darkness and among the dead, a new object of fear succeeded; he called to his companion, he stretched out his arms in the direction where he had stood, and recollecting the dimensions of that part of the vault, he felt
with

with the most accurate search every quarter that his hands or his sword could reach,—in vain; he encountered no object, he heard no sound, and was only recalled from his dream of pursuit by the entrance of the attendants with the corpse, into another part of the vault; the light directed him to them, and he eagerly inquired if his companion had been seen by any of them, adding the closest description that fear and haste permitted him to give. The men stared with astonishment; and on his urging the inquiry, averred with one voice that no human being had that night visibly entered the vault but themselves. “Did he render me, as well as himself, invisible?” thought Montorio, as he returned amazed and unsatisfied.

A letter, in the hand writing he now well knew, was again left in his apartment. “Your probation is over; you are without fear and without weakness; you

may command my power and knowledge to their extent, beyond the reach of nature and thought, beyond the dream of enthusiasm, even in the wild and wishing hour you may command them. *May*, have I said? alas! you *must* command them. Mine is no voluntary service. Oh, that worlds might purchase my exemption! But they cannot; and when worlds shall end, my task will have but begun. As little voluntary is the spirit of inquiry that now impels you, and whose impulses you believe to be casual and free. Would you know more? I have no longer a right to conceal aught from you; then be in the west colonnade of the church of S. Piero, with no arms but fortitude, no companion but midnight; and when the bell shall toll, I will stand beside thee." In the intervals of these summonses, Montorio had often inquired into the means by which they were conveyed into his room; the domestics,

mestics, on examining them, declared no such had been left at the palace, or given to them for their master; but when dismissed, after a fruitless inquiry, they talked much among themselves of a person that was frequently seen in their master's apartment, and who, it was said, disappeared when any one entered it. By this account, if he was more perplexed, he was yet more excited, and he awaited with impatience the appointed hour; it arrived—he hastened to the church of S. Piero; it was a clear and lovely night, the moon fleckered the columns with streaks of silver, and gave a more thin and pointed brightness to the wrought edges and tracery of the pediments and friezes. Montorio at every turn examined his watch, and with a beating heart and suppressed breath, perceived it wanted but a moment of twelve.—Now it struck, and the stranger stood beside him. “Are you prepared?” said he,

he, in a low but firm tone. "It is Ippolito di Montorio to whom you speak, there needs no other answer," said Montorio proudly. "Youth," said the stranger, lay aside these weapons of fleshly warfare; where you are called to contend, pride of soul and force of arm avail not; lay them aside, with the sword and the dagger, the strength of flesh, and the arms of mortality; take with you only fortitude, that will shut out light without a sigh, and firmness that will bear to behold what it must bear to undergo." A voice issuing from the grave could not have delivered this monition in more chilling tones; Montorio felt their influence in every nerve, and followed his conductor with an awe which preserved his curiosity from levity, and divested his expectation of impatience.

They went on with silent speed, but the stranger sometimes paused, and looked upward, and Montorio once thought he

he beheld a tear in his eye as he raised it. They reached a remote and unfrequented part of the city; they stopped; the stranger seemed shaken with many emotions, there was no local cause for them; the quiet loneliness of the place; the moon, that seemed stationary for very brightness; the sea, whose checkered and sparkling waters just rose to the eye, and whose murmurs rose and fell with lulling measure, all seemed to speak peace to the spirit that had one peaceful element. "Oh, youth!" said the stranger, "the hour is come; thou, or I, may shun it no longer; and these struggles, these cold drops of inward agony, are for thee. The hour is come; and amidst a power that rules or reverses nature, I am as a worm of the dust, a thing of nought, confounded and dismayed. Oh, youth! it is for thee I have prayed that this task might not be mine; but he, whose hand hath made the thunder, will

consign it to whom he will, and he must wield it, though its fires blast him.”—

“By whatever power you act,” said Ippolito, “you have excited in me wonder and amazement; hasten, therefore, that I may know whether I am not, as often, the dupe of a vicious sensibility of the marvellous, or whether these impressions are, indeed, the movements and intimations of my fate.” The stranger produced a bandage—“With this,” said he, “your eyes must be bound; and take with it a caution, whatever you may see or hear, be silent, be motionless, and be fearless.” Montorio suffered him to fasten the bandage, and was then conducted by him through many ways, of which he in vain tasked himself to remember the direction. They now ceased to tread on the pavement, and Montorio felt, from the change of air, that they were in some building; in a short time they began to descend steps; as they descended, the air changed
again,

again, but it was the chillness of subterranean damp; the echoes were dull and protracted, and no longer mixed with those sounds of life which they had heard in the open air. The descent seemed to be endless. Ippolito in vain tried to appease the irksomeness of involuntary blindness, and perhaps other unwelcome feelings, by reckoning the steps. The echoes became more hollow, the damp more dewy, and Montorio felt that even the misty and impalpable light that the bandage had not utterly denied him, was now obscured by intense darkness. He had often spoke, but received no answer, and now grew weary of the echoes of his own voice, unmixed as they were with any other sound, and giving an idea of utter solitude, which he was almost glad to recur to the pressure of his arm, and the sound of his conductor's steps, to repel. An hour had now elapsed since they left the haunts of men, and

Montorio almost imagined this passage was intended to penetrate below the bottom of ocean, when he felt himself checked by the hand which led him. A sound then succeeded, which was so multiplied by the echoes of the place, that its distinctness was lost, and he found himself in a moment descending, with a swiftness so rapid, so breathless, so astounding, that he sickened with very giddiness, and gasped for the recovery of sense;—the motion ceased—he knew not how he had descended: he was again led forward; many sounds met him in his passage; some descended from above, and some brushed near him; blasts of different airs crossed him, some so hot, they felt like floods of flame, some so cold, he shivered in their parching blight. A sound, as of the ocean in its strength, was then heard; it came nearer and louder, and Ippolito almost expected to feel its waters bearing up his feet. All
sound

sound and motion then ceased, and he felt himself slowly invested in a garb, of which the form seemed to be unlike any usually worn; his hands were unrestrained; he examined the garb with them—it was the garb of the dead. But this was no time for resistance, and he believed his only means of safety was the observance of the stranger's caution: prudence was for once combined with his courage, and he remained silent. A voice then, deep and distant, repeated the service of the dead; the responses were echoed by multiplied myriads of voices. Montorio heard the solemn words pronounced over him, which no living man hears; he felt the shroud and the crucifix, he heard the bell and the requiem; he remembered his conductor's words, and expected to see the light no more, when his bandage was dissolved, and he was hurried forward.

What objects or circumstances he witnessed there, he has not told; what-

whatever intimations are given of them, are casual and obscure, extorted by a sudden exclamation of pain, or involved in the train of other confessions, but from such intimations I believe them to be of a nature too horrible to be told ; what I have learned has been principally collected from letters which passed between him and the stranger, and of which I have copies ; at these meetings, it should appear no word was uttered, and whatever required explanation or discussion produced a letter, which was, as usual, left in his apartments, by means none could discover. Of the first of these the contents are as follows :

Letter from the Stranger.

“What can dispel your suspicions? What can obviate your doubts? You have already had every assurance I am no pretender, that I seek neither ag-
gran-

grandizement nor influence, that I am unanxious the impressions you receive should convey any thing to you but a conviction of the genuineness of their cause and object; for myself this is superfluous, I need neither consciousness nor proof of my commission. Ages have I strove in vain to lose the dreadful sense of it; it is on you I seek to make a single impression—that I am the certain and commissioned organ of your fate, that I bear a power and office, which I must neither decline nor qualify, which you may neither resist nor change. Recollect how you have complained of the rapacity of former pretenders, wretches, whose mercenary ignorance blasphemes the awful name and objects of the other world, (whose visitation often and judicially punishes their presumption, by the infliction of madness and idiotcy, the natural extremes of a brain overwrought with gloomy and cumbrous

cumbrous contemplations,) and whose quaint fooleries are as easily detected as their needy avidity. What has been my pursuit of you? What have been my claims on you? The very dreadful instruments of our preparation, the form and circumstance of our meeting, are such as human hands could not collect without toil and pain, if you can indeed believe them to have been the collection of human hands; and what demands have been made, but on your acquiescence and conviction. Here is a proof, a native and intrinsic proof of the reality of my office and power, which no sober mind can well gainsay, that a number of beings should conspire to condemn themselves to toil, and pain, and horror, unexcited, unsolicited, unrewarded, merely to persecute and perplex another being, over whom they seek no other influence, and who can neither punish nor please them, is an outrage to the credulity of
even

even a Montorio. Again, an impostor might perhaps stimulate your feelings by artificial and well-measured delay, but he would beware of protracting this beyond its due term of operation, of suffering solicitude to fret itself into impatience; but he whose power is beyond and unswayed by himself, must await its ebbs and its flows, the rush of its approach, and the lingerings of its suspension, in passive expectancy, hushed and still. Do you remember last night? Many times have you trodden that place, which only your own human feet have ever entered; before you had been even summoned there, I told you I could foreshew every event of your life, yet—even yet—I have not the power to declare it. How many nights have now witnessed those unuttered and terrible things, which once obtained a knowledge and potency for me, now inscrutably withheld. Last night, moved by

the danger to which your impetuosity opposed you from my ministers, (whose services I command, though I cannot repress their power or malignity,) I had recourse to those deep and dreadful extremes, which I once believed no human cause could demand the use of, or no mortal witness; but in vain, the master-agent of our movements would not be tasked: the earthquake, the whirlwind, and the fire were there, but he was not there. I wrestled with these terrible engines of his coming, I writhed in convulsed and fervent agony, and were mine the life of nature, the struggles of last night had ended it. It was in vain you departed with rage and imprecations that you would return no more. Was this then voluntary and artificial? An agent, whose power and movements are his own, exerts them without producing any effect, but fruitless toil and angry disappointment!!!

Is

Is this credible? I collect these circumstances that they may certify to you, what the levity of your mind, and your experience of repeated imposition, tend to conceal, or render indifferent to you; that my power and commission are extrinsic, are involuntary, and are real."

To this, only part of Ippolito's answer appears: "Whatever was the complexion of my mind, when I formerly pursued similar objects, it is now totally changed; though ever grasping at the secrets of another state, and pursuing their attainment under every form and colour of probability, I recollect rather feeling towards them expectation than belief, rather seeking to discover, *if* they were really within mortal reach and capacity, than seeking them, *because* they were.

"I think I recollect seeking to these professors, and awaiting their fantastic exhibitions, in a mixed and not unpleasing

pleasing state of suspension, where the awful solicitude, from which no mortal is exempt, was tempered by the natural jealousy of deception, by the experience of disappointment and imposition, and above all, by the native and inherent scepticism of *negative experience*, which is perhaps the only balance that renders the terrors of such expectation supportable, and even grateful. I was, therefore unconsciously prepared for every event of such meetings, and I attended them with a fortitude, in the cause of which many deceive themselves. I had curiosity to excite me in the pursuit, and possibly to support me, had it been successful; I had vigilance, taught by experience, to scrutinize into imposition, and I had a shade of levity over my mind, the offspring of natural and involuntary incredulity, which disposed me to laugh at detected folly and fraud, with the same facility with

with which I would have shuddered at the terrible discoveries the other event of the meeting would have prepared for me : above all, when I had received any impression from the strange objects which some of them were able to summon or to create, I examined and sifted it with a tenacity, of which probably the motive was curiosity, but of which the end was uniformly the discovery of deception, of the force of local emotion, or of the assemblage of fearful or unwonted imagery. Thus, therefore, I continued to pursue it, hopeless of attaining success or certainty in the original object of my search, yet gratifying an appetite for the marvellous, which repeated indulgence had rendered restless, and fastidious, and insatiable, and of which the sensation resembled that which urges us to the theatre, where we gaze, delighted by vision and sound, but not deceived into reality.

From

From my first conference with you, the frame of my mind was totally altered ; the severity, the simplicity, the high and remote modes of language and action I witnessed, struck me with a complicated feeling of fear and confidence, of wild joy and supernatural dread I cannot describe : all I saw was unlike all I had before seen. Instead of being mocked by fantastic jargon, I was restrained by solemn silence ; instead of being plundered with vulgar rapacity, I was taught that all human influence, whether of force or of insinuation, was nugatory there ; instead of commanding, I was commanded, and that by an influence viewless, and impassive, and unsearchable. Of all this, the effect has been the irritation of my feelings, almost to madness, the inflammation of my curiosity to a pitch and point, which I believe nothing but its very strength and vivid force enables me to endure. By all this terrible

rible preparation, a weak mind might have been depressed and subjected, and have relinquished its object rather than encounter the horrors that invested it ; but mine is an elastic one, and it rises with a force and spring proportioned to the pressure it has been urged by. I feel all subordinate desires and objects absorbed by one—the desire to obtain that long-withheld and mysterious something, which I seize with such a comprehensive grasp of expectancy, that it has no distinctness of form or name in my thoughts—the desire to know all you can disclose, or cause me to know. It utterly absorbs me ; I cease to inquire into the truth or evidences of your commission or pretensions ; you are anxious to press their examination on me—I am indifferent to them. Were it proved to me this moment that you were an impostor, that all I had witnessed was the very fooling of my fear, I would still pursue
you

you with unabated anxiousness, to supply my feelings with that food for which their appetite is famishing and delirious. Talk no more of delays and proofs, and the cold exercise of my faculties; I tell you I am mad—mad, till I am gratified! By what means you have attained this influence, I know not; perhaps it is a part of that strange power you say is forced on you; but exert it no longer to torture—I am miserable—my day and night are one delirious dream; my burning eyes have not tasted sleep for many days; the images of the night are ever around me: often I smite my arms and breast, and rend out handfuls of my hair to deaden or distract that pain, whose gnawing and fiery keenness seems to survive all change of time, and place, and motion, to sting me in my broken sleep, and live through every hour of life. Have mercy on me! If you can do any thing, do it, and let me have ease. Montorio.”

Many such letters appear to have passed between them, most of which contain repetitions of what I have now read: on the one side claims to some undescribed and mysterious power, of which all direct proof was, however, withheld, and on the other a continuance of complaint, and entreaty, and remonstrance. Whether relief was delayed, because it was out of the power of the stranger to bestow it, or suspended, because he judged suspension would answer his purpose better, it is certain that purpose was fully attained. Montorio's mind was wrought to an intense and desperate state of feeling; all thoughts, and passions, and objects were swallowed up by one; his whole day was passed in obscure expectation of the events of the night, the night in disappointment of that expectation, and the following day in the renewal of that dark and feverish hope, which, while it tormented his existence,

istence, seemed to constitute the very principle and spring of it. I have very imperfect documents of these melancholy times; but it should seem that one night Montorio contrived to signify to his conductor, that his mind was burdened with many things, which haste and confusion would prevent him from committing to paper; that he was anxious to discuss them in a personal conference; and that if the stranger owned the power he professed, he could indulge him with that conference under hours and circumstances that would prevent the possibility of intrusion or discovery. "I will go," answered the stranger, "because your importunity proceeds from a suspicion that I cannot comply with it. I will go, therefore, to convince you that no time or place have a power in them to repel me." Ippolito wondered mentally, for he felt this had been the real motive of his request.

On

On the following night, Ippolito had been detained unusually late by an engagement; he returned with the childish joy of a truant; his valet lit him to his apartment, but both started back on observing a stranger in the room, in an uncommon garb, who sat with his back to the entrance, and who did not rise on their approach. Montorio, immediately discovering his visitor, dismissed the terrified servant, and advanced, with some expressions, I suppose, of complacency, which his surprise rendered incoherent. “You have forgotten your appointment, Signor, but I have not neglected mine,” said the stranger, with a smile somewhat grim. “I am glad you have not,” said Montorio, “I have long wished to see you here.”—“I am,” answered the stranger, “a constant though unobserved visitor; nor would you, perhaps, be pleased to know how often I have trod this room, and drawn your curtains, and beheld you sleeping

sleeping in that bed ; nay, how often I have passed in the broad light of day, and almost touched you as I passed, and you beheld me not.”—“ Oh !” said Montorio, tossing with impatience, “ is it ever to be thus ? am I to be ever abused and mocked by a power that is extensive and resistless only to torment me ? can you thus control nature, and yet not give an individual that intelligence which the meanest pretenders to your art will endeavour to give at the first conference ?”

“ Because they are pretenders,” said the stranger sternly ; “ their very facility proves it ; your mind, its habits and faculties, have been so vitiated by marvellous indulgence, so outraged by lying inconsistency, that you cannot easily admit the bare forms of reality, the cold solemnity of truth ; you have been accustomed to the jargon of astrology, the fooleries of the wizard, the phosphoric blaze, and the spectre of gauze ; you can
digest

digest the idea of beings who can mount in cloud and fire, who can yoke the spirits of the blast, who can be served by the forms of the elements, and discover treasures that nature never owned: that such should lurk in the hovel of indigence, should depend on plundered credulity for their subsistence, should shrink from the cognizance of earthly power, and when detected, want a single friendly familiar to save them from ignominy and punishment; you can digest *this*; and therefore, to you, he that speaks with the simplicity of truth, must appear as one that mocketh." "I am, indeed, mocked," said Montorio impetuously, "mocked by my own timidity, by my own folly; but, by the living God, I will be mocked no more!" He started up, he grasped the stranger wildly—"Either satisfy me this moment; tell me who and what you are, for what purpose you have fastened on me to haunt
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and to madden me, or you never shall quit this apartment. By that tremendous name I invoked, I will never relax my hold till you have told me whom it is I speak to." "Who I am," said the stranger rising to the question, "who knows, and who can tell? Sometimes I do not know myself; yet often I am as other men, and do with them the deeds of common life. But when that hour cometh, when the power is on me—then" said he (and his visage lightened, and his frame dilated) "the torrent and the tempest shrink from me, the ocean in his force retires from me, the foundations fail from under me; then I ride on the horses of the night, I pass from region to region like the shadow, I tread the verge of being alone;—that is my term of punishment, and its control is terrible; then am I left motionless, wasted, annihilated, on the mountain top, in the desert, on the ocean; I feel the
earthly

earthly air breathe on me again, I feel the beams that give light to man falling soft on me ; then I begin to live again. —But I hear the feet of my taskers, and I spring onward before the moon has set.” —“ Unimaginable being,” said Ippolito with strong emotion, “ shall I worship thee as a deity, or shun thee as a fiend ? What are those goblin shapes that are with you every night ? and what is it ye do in the bowels of the earth ? ” —“ Some of them are my agents, and some my punishers ; we are a race of beings, of whose existing many have talked, many have read, and none believed ; we can be only known by our properties, for our nature who shall tell ? the meanest of us are employed in the mischiefs of creation, the meanest of us toil in the mountain and the mine, yell in the tempest, and lash and furrow the flood, edge the lightning points, and mix and watch the seeds of the pestilence ; but we who are of a higher class, Oh ! who shall tell
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the height of our punishment? It is ours to watch over a frame a million times more corrupt and distempered—the heart of man, and his life, and his actions. There is not a deed of blood, there is not a deed of horror, there is not a murderer, there is not a being whose fate and circumstances make his species shudder to hear or read, but it is ours to lead and to prompt, to harden and to inflame, to sear the conscience and to steel the arm.” —“ And is it for such a purpose I am thus haunted?” interrupted Montorio wildly, “ and am I to be—what must I be? a murderer! a being whose fate shall makemankind shudder! Tell me,” he exclaimed, seizing the stranger again, and almost shouting with vehemence, “ only tell me, and I forgive you.” —“ What your fate will be,” said the stranger, “ I can only intimate from the eagerness and tumult of the preparation that accompanied its disclosure to me. I was,” said he, fixing his eyes and

and planting his feet, “in the very central core of the earth when I received it, and I stood beside you at night.”—“And yet you cannot disclose it, even now—” he paused a moment; “Does this delay intimate any thing beside your power of suspending your victims?”—“I dare not flatter you, I have ever found this supernatural delay precede the disclosure of something of uncommon horror—at least I recollect it to have been so in the case of your ancestor, Muzio di Montorio, who lived in the troubles of Massaniello.”—“In the troubles of Massaniello, why they were 200 years ago!”—“They were.”—“And you knew Muzio di Montorio, who lived at that time?”—“I did; my knowledge of circumstances, which could be known only to a contemporary, will prove it. He was a man proud and irritable; one of the Girola family had obstructed his success both in love and fortune; a deadly hate to this

man fixed on Montorio's mind : from that moment it became my office to tend and observe him. I bore another form then ; my prognostics of his fate, which were tempting and partial, roused his curiosity ; I was with him day and night, as I am with you, but his fate it was not permitted me to tell expressly. Weary at length of suspended expectation, and disgusted with Naples, where the constant presence of his enemy occurred, he prepared to fly from Italy ; but he could not fly from me : he thought he had, however, and proceeded with satisfaction. On the dreary hills between Pisa and Lucca, he was benighted at a small inn on the borders of a forest ; he inquired if he could pass the night there, and was told all the rooms were occupied by the Count Girola and his train. Muttering curses on the name, he was preparing to pass the night in the forest, and brave the violence of an approaching storm,

sooner

sooner than enter the roof of his foe, when the host recollecting himself, informed him he might have an apartment, for he had heard the Count say he would pass the night at a kinsman's of his, whose castle was about a mile distant, and where his train, after passing the night at the inn, not to incommode his kinsman, might join him in the morning. The image of his enemy, in a lonely forest, unattended, unprepared, flashed like lightning on the mind of Montorio. I was beside him at that moment. He bid his attendants halt at the inn, and plunged into the forest with blind fury. The storm came on ; he saw not who rode behind him in it ; he saw not what shape was in the ghastly light that shone round his horse, as the heavy sulphur clouds rolled over the forest. But I and others were near him—near !—we were above, around, within him. He lurked in a thicket, a dark, matted, briery thicket,

where by the glancing of the lightning he saw a cross erected, in memory of murder recently done there. As he beheld it, I heard him groan, and I believed my office was rendered void (for a moment); but in the next he heard a voice which made his teeth grind and his flesh shiver; it was the voice of Girola, desiring his page, who was on foot, and his only attendant, to hold his torch lower, as the forest track was dark and tangled. Montorio rushed forward; the page fled shrieking, and dropt the torch. Girola was afterwards found near the thicket, horribly butchered; his skull alone had seven deep wounds in it, as if the hand that struck him was resolved to hunt and extinguish life wherever it might linger. Muzio was also found by some messengers from the kinsman's castle, and by Girola's train, bareheaded, leaping, and raving, for the rage of his revenge had deprived him of reason; he
was

was brought back to Naples, tried for the murder, and condemned. In prison I was again with him, for human hindrances are nought to me; he knew me, for his reason returned, and acknowledged the truth of my intimations. I was with him in the last terrible hour, and wished my being frail and finite like his. But it must not be; with me time is ever beginning, suffering is ever to be. But I talk of myself, and no wonder, for every mode of human misery revives my own, which mixes with all, partakes of all, and yet is distinct from all, by a dreadful exemption from solace, or mitigation, or end.”—“This is passing all belief,” said Ippolito, who was musing and speaking inwardly. “If we yield to these things, if we do not rouse up our minds, and put them to the issue, we may at once resign all power and exercise of reason.” He paused, and fixed his eyes earnestly on the stranger. “The circum-

circumstances you have related are such, indeed, as none but a contemporary (or one versed in secrets I thought hidden from all strangers) could know ; yet still I listen to you, mazed and reluctant ; but," rising and eagerly advancing, " if you can give me one proof, one solid, *masculine* proof, that you witnessed the transactions of times so distant, I will yield, I will believe every thing, I will submit to every thing, I will crush every thing in my mind that rises against or resists you."—" I can," said the stranger, rising also, " the portrait of Muzio is in the next room, take that taper and follow me ; survey that picture, the left hand rests on a marble scroll ; do you see the ring on that thumb ?"—" I do."—" Nay, but remark it, 'tis most remarkable, so much so, that it was always worn by the owner, and faithfully copied in the portrait ; it was an antique, found in a vault in the demesne of his friend,

Cardinal

Cardinal Lanucci, a man well known in the consistory those days, and presented by him to Muzio ; you have observed it, now look here." He showed the ring on the forefinger of his right hand ; " you must often have heard of this ring, you must have heard it disappeared with Muzio, and that your family deplored the loss of it ; he gave it to me almost in his last moments, for I was with him then ; and now," said he with an unutterable look, " now he is with me." Ippolito was so absorbed in wonder at the circumstance, of which it was not easy to dispute the evidence, that he even forgot the constant subject of his solicitude and inquiry, and suffered him to depart without question or delay. As he was quitting the apartment, which looked into the street, a number of monks passed along, who were going to visit a dying man, and who elevated the host for adoration as they went ; Ippolito,

lito, scarcely waking from his trance, paid the short form of habitual worship, but the stranger turned away disconcerted and perturbed.

Ippolito felt delight at his departure; this last circumstance impressed him with the terror that attends the doubtful presence of something not good; and he leant from the window, half expecting to see him dissolve in air or flame as he quitted the palace. But it was now broad day, and he saw his strange visitor pass with slow and visible motion down the Strada di Toledo.

But the impression which the conference was intended to convey soon revived, and Ippolito describes it as most strange and peculiar. He writes, that when he awoke from his noon-day sleep (now the only one he took), the first sensation he experienced was a consciousness of new agency, a new view of existence, a clear and thorough perspective, in which the
modes

modes of life lay before him, not as they appear to the human mind, mixed, uncertain, and obscure, possessing an eternal power of exciting expectation by novelty, and tempting solicitude by doubt, but all equally near and familiar, and, as it were, in the same plane to his mental eye, as if by some optical deception all the distant objects of a long journey were at once rendered equally large, and striking, and palpable, to one who had but just set out on it.

But the effect of this extraordinary approximation was not to make him satiated by the nearness, or weary of the familiarity of these objects; no, he felt his mind as it were hedged up and pressed on by them, with a force which no other could interpose between or remit; his powers seemed not to be occupied, but compressed, not ambitious of enlargement, but incapable of dilation; to *him* there was but one course to be followed,

but one act to be done. He felt like one whose fate is already told, and to whom no future discovery can reveal any object of toil or of solicitude ; there was therefore within him a strange passiveness, that yet did not exclude the highest degree of busy excitement. He felt some great event was not to be wrought, but to be waited for ; all the dullness of lingering expectation was superseded by this great event being as it were placed in contact with his mind, in place of tumultuous preparation ; there was therefore an earnest awaitment, and amid the most vigorous mental emotions he possessed an entire animal calm. When he arose and went abroad, and looked around him, those whom he met, and their pursuits, appeared to him indescribably vague, and trivial, and hollow. He mentally wondered how men could be engaged in pursuits whose attainment was not certain, or in views whose objects were

were distant and indefinite. A million of times in that day he said to himself, "How can these beings exercise such alacrity and zeal for they know not what? they cannot see the events of another hour, yet they push on with eagerness in their eye, and activity in their motion. How dreadfully flat and vacant would such pursuit be to me! in me the clear and certain view of supernatural disclosure justifies the utmost energy of motion, as well as the utmost patience of expectation." But when his mind had partly recovered from the glare which this new light had poured on it, and the artificial nearness in which it had placed the objects it disclosed, he began to inquire *what new light had indeed been poured on his mind, or what new object had been discovered by its help?* NONE! The intimation of his fate had been conveyed in the most general terms of doubtful prediction; something had been revealed,

vealed, but without circumstance or connection ; all that can prompt inquiry, or distinguish between our own conjecture and the information of others, was concealed. But enough had been told to fill the high-minded and romantic Ippolito with delight while he thought of it ; his fate was to be no vulgar one (by the agent employed to announce it) ; he was not to fall with the unknown, nor lie with those that are not remembered : something great, terrible, or tragical was to mark the close of his course.

Before the day ended he had mentally rehearsed, and compared, and applied all the circumstances of high and distinguished endings of life he could remember ; calculated what relation the most probable of them could bear to the period of his own ; and, clothed in the array of visionary heroism, beheld life and death pass before him with indifference. Such was his propensity to the romantic and
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the marvellous, and such his thirst for distinction, that the gratification of these primitive feelings of his nature was not only a balance for the view of near and expected dissolution, but even for those more dark and disastrous intimations which the stranger suggested relative to the usual complexion of the fate of those to whom he was appointed to predict it. The triumph of these high-wrought and vivid feelings was short; he was about to exchange the pride of gratified solicitude, the stirrings of noble expectation, the dream of high-fated and heroic visionry, for doubt, which he believed to be gone, and for remorse, which he thought never would arrive.

I do not know whether for some days after this visit he saw the stranger; I rather imagine not, for he had again leisure and relaxation of mind sufficient to mingle in society: such is the power of habit over minds even in the highest state of excitement.

excitement. This I collect from his next page, which, though sufficiently incoherent, informs me he was engaged to a fete at the villa of the Countess Verano, near the foot of the mountain. The villa was not sufficiently large to contain the numerous company, who intended to stay for some days, and most of the cavaliers passed the night in temporary buildings which were scattered through the demesne, furnished with refreshments in the day, and illuminated in the evening. To one of these Ippolito retired ; but the balmy moonlight and air that came mingled like one element through the bowery lattice of his hut, refreshed him more than sleep, and he arose and feasted silently. He had not been long at the window when he thought he saw the figure of a man, whose habit and gesture were strange, advancing from the trees, and moving with caution and fear. Whether his mind was fatigued by
dissipation,

dissipation, or whether he saw no resemblance in this object to any that might excite an apprehension, he observed it and saw it disappear without an inquiry. Soon after he retired to his rustic bed; the lamps had been long extinguished; but the moon shone full through the foliage of the casement, and once accidentally raising his eyes, on thinking that light obstructed, he fancied he saw the face of a man at the casement, looking in earnestly: even this made only a momentary impression on him, and he was soon asleep. We are utterly the creatures of time and place; had the day been passed in solitude, had his dormitory been at a distance from the habitations of others, had there been an impression on his mind, like the expectation of some fearful thing, much slighter appearances would have roused him. He slept not long, however, he was awakened by a glare of light and a pressure on his breast;

breast; he attempted to rise, but could not, and when he was able to distinguish objects, he saw the stranger bending over him; there was a wild force in his expression and gestures, and a combination of the fantastic and horrible in his appearance that made Ippolito shrink as from a spectre. A long, dark robe was his only covering, on which the characters and emblems were, some of them too obscure, and some too wild for examination. It was fastened by a cincture, on which the word "mystery" was inscribed; his long arms were bare, his long black hair streamed around him, but the temples were bound by a circle of fire, whose points blazed in the eyes of Ippolito as he looked upward. "Awake, arise, Ippolito di Montorio, arise and come with me!"—"Who are you? and wherefore are you come? and whither must I go?"—"The hour is come, stay not to question; the power, which nothing

thing can resist, is come; stay not to question." As he spoke, he disappeared. On what a subtle hinge do our motions turn? Had the stranger but waited to repeat his injunction, or allow time for expostulation, Montorio would probably have been checked by the delay, and forborne to accompany him; but his departure had an air of independence in it that impelled Montorio to follow him involuntarily. He had lain down in his vest, and now wrapping his mantle round him, soon overtook his conductor; the latter proceeded with a speed that did not move but glide. Ippolito with all the vigour of youth and expectation scarcely could keep pace with him; wherever they went, all seemed buried in sleep, and without exchanging a word, or remitting their speed, they reached the suburbs of Naples. The bandage was again put on, and Ippolito conducted to the subterranean passage. What his feelings

ings were at this moment, he probably had not leisure to remember or describe. A man who, inflamed by dissipation, is roused from sleep, and plunged among objects of terror, can only tell of a mixt and tumultuous state, in which, though all was unpleasant, nothing was distinct. The first clear impression that such a person would experience, would probably be from an object affecting not his mind but his senses: and consistently with this, he says, that when the bandage excluded from him the distraction of external things, when the echoes of that passage smote his ear, and his breath was driven back by the dark and heavy air, the mist that had obscured his mind and senses seemed to disperse, and he became suddenly and keenly capable of reflexion. His first sensation was delight, a proud and eager delight, that welcomed an object so remote and long desired, not without an awe, such as his present
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circumstances suggested, and such as the romantic mind loves. But while he was yet in the confusion of sudden joy, a strange feeling came to his heart, a doubtful terror, such as he had never before known, was on him; to bodily fear he was a stranger. He spoke of this sensation as the inward and sensible motion of a power above him, a power that impressed the evidence of its own agency by a resistless consciousness, an intimate peculiarity, which cannot be communicated but cannot be mistaken. The stranger felt his steps falter—he paused—“I am out of breath,” said he, “and this air suffocates and repels me.”—“That is not your motive for pausing,” said his conductor; “I acknowledge it is not,” said Ippolito, “there is a feeling within me, such as no time, or place, not even this, with all its circumstances, ever suggested to me before; it tells me to return, it tells me to visit these haunts, to proceed
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in this business, no further. I wonder at the sudden change of my mind and views, I wonder at the gulf that seems to have opened between me and my most vital pursuit, at this utter dampness and despondency that has struck to my heart's core; it makes me an astonishment to myself: but I believe it to be the intimation of a power either within me or above me, and this hesitation is, not to obey but to ascertain it." The stranger paused for some time. "The sensation you describe, you do not know the cause of; nor would any hour or place, but those in which we now are, justify me in its disclosure; it is part of the influence of this most signal night, part of the influence felt by all, by the traveller in his lonely journey, who hurries on at this moment, he knows not why; by the retired man, who trims his lamp to repel the solitary feeling that comes to his heart; nay, by the very child, who
waking

waking now shudders a prayer, and tries to hide itself under sleep. The influence of this hour is felt by all, and misunderstood by all; they judge of it by their various superstitions of time and place: it is the presence of our master that hangs in the elements, darkening the night, and sending fear into the souls of men. This influence is now felt by you, but mixing it up with your habitual feelings, you mistake it for a monition from a power that reaches not here."

This new appeal to his curiosity made Ippolito at once forget his doubt and hesitation. "Who is your master, let me look on him?"—"He has neither name, nor form, nor symbol of existence."—"How then can you know that he is present with you?"—"By signs, which cannot be told to man."—"And is it his presence you have required so long, and will it now enable you to reveal my fate to me clearly and faithfully? is this the
great

great opportunity so long withheld? shall I know all to-night?"—"Whatever is to be known, must be known to-night; though uninvoked and invisible, he is present with us, and all things are possible. I have neglected nothing to prepare me for the business; you saw me surrounded by fires, the relics of the grave, and the blood of dead men; but what hands arrayed me in them," said he in a deeper tone, "you could not see."—"Proceed," said Ippolito eagerly, "if indeed you have such power, and this be its hour of exercise; if I shall learn to-night what no mortal power can unfold, it is the very pitch of my enthusiasm, the very point and sum of my visionary ambition, and I will follow you, though my steps falter, and my mind sicken with some unutterable presage; but if this be a night of disappointment, by him whose name I dare not name in this den of sorcery I will enter it no more."

His conductor enjoined silence, and led him onward; they descended. Ippolito endeavoured to collect all the strength of his mind for what he believed to be a signal, even if a fictitious struggle; but such were the terrors of the place, and such the impression, utterly distinct from deception or professional imposture that attended the words and movements of his companion, that he sought in vain for that relief which the belief of having only to do with beings like ourselves always affords to the terrors of such an encounter. He endeavoured intently to recall to his memory impressions of former awe, expunged by discoveries of former deception; but there was no resemblance either in the modes or agents to qualify his present emotions with the suspicion that they were excited in vain, and he continued his silent progress in that unpleasant state of mind in which receding expectation is pursued
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by advancing fear, and the apprehension, having gone too far, is aggravated by the doubt that it is possible to return. They went on, however, without interruption until they arrived at that place of which I could get no description except from sudden starts and exclamations of horror. The bandage was removed. Ippolito observed, that every object bore a different aspect on this night from any he had seen on his preceding visits; whatever strange appearances used to meet or greet him on his entrance, were now removed or silent. As he passed through the vault, the former ministers of fear were stretched around him in deep sleep, and as he walked among them (the blazing and up-pointed hairs of his conductor his only light), some of them shuddered and some moaned, some of them laughed and some gibbered inarticulately, and pointed towards him. "Of those forms," said the stranger, "the living

living spirits are now absent ; for, ever before they meet their master, they have a short space of rest and remission ; it would weary the imagination to follow their flight now, where they are contending with contending elements, or shooting on the track of the meteor when he careers beyond this bourne of earth, and suspends them over the unknown vast, ‘ without form and void.’ Of those that haunt the habitation of man, it is easier to guess the pastime ; some are weaving the dim and ghastly visions of the sick, some are searing the sleep of the guilty with sounds of remembered voices, and forms that they thought sleep would shut out ; some hide in ruins, from which they send wailing voices, that seem like bodings of fearful things to the belated passenger, or lights that lure him to the den of the robber, or the brow of the precipice ; and some in the dwellings of the dead, where they do

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things, such as crazy superstition, or the howling maniac never dreamed of." On Ippolito's mind, this assemblage of terrible imagery produced no additional effect; he had wound it to a fearful pitch, even to that of all others to our nature the most repugnant, which, laying aside all the softnesses and levities of life, prepares to look upon the unclothed and unqualified, and near-brought nakedness of death. He said, he felt within him a dark strength, a stubborn and horrid force of mind, as if he were determined to be revenged on any terrors the discoveries of the night might prepare for him, by contemning and defying them, for so strong was the impression of the reality and certainty of what was about to be disclosed to him, that he had no more idea of resisting or evading it, than if a voice from heaven had declared it to him. In this ferocious sullenness, therefore, his mind took

took shelter, and though he endeavoured to exchange it for that resignation of which he had heard moralists talk, and which he felt to be the more appropriate feeling of that crisis, yet still the natural resentment of an oppressing force, the native abhorrence of having our liberty abridged, and our path hedged up and carved out for us, (even by a superior power, and of the knowledge of whose precise operations our pursuit has been eager and incessant,) filled him with emotions gloomy, perturbed, and rebellious. What were the peculiar rites of this signal night I know not, nor whether the presence of the evil one superseded the attendance of his ministers, who were absent on their goblin devices, but after describing his feelings in lines of which the tremor is yet visible, Ippolito went on to tell me he was left alone and in utter darkness, in some remote part of this im-

mense space, (which he described as a *territory* under ground,) with injunctions neither to speak nor move, but to see, and to mark what he beheld. By what means he was to see in utter darkness, he could not conjecture, till at a distance he beheld a small blue flame rise before him, it spread and enlarged gradually, and ascending to a vast height, stood, without any of the flickering or volatile appearance of fire, a fixed and voluminous curtain of vapour. Its light, though strong and distinct, but partially discovered the extent of the vault, its dusky and ill-defined roof, and those parts of it whose limits pressed on the edge of the flame, were faintly visible; into the recesses of deeper darkness that spread around him, Ippolito felt not inclined to look. Meanwhile, the body of the flame, slowly diminishing and dividing, was suspended in a luminous arch, within
which

which appeared a black reflecting surface, which filled the whole interval, and which Ippolito compared to a mirror of black marble. He gazed intently; several undefined forms chased each other over the surface, and were lost in the columns that formed its frame. At length, a full distinct form appeared directly opposite to him; it was in a modern garb, the face was concealed, the gestures indicated distraction and dismay; Ippolito, as yet unconscious of the intelligence they were to convey, watched its motions fixedly. Had the figure availed itself of every mode of speech and expression, it could not have conveyed more powerfully the idea of a being impelled by a power resistless and invisible, to some deed or object, from which it shrunk, sometimes with humility of deprecation, sometimes with devices of evasion, and sometimes with convulsions

sions of resistance, still the power that acted on it appeared to increase in strength and effect, and its progress towards this event appeared more rapid; its motions were now most strongly indicative of fear, irresolution, and reluctance; like the animals who are said to be within the sphere of fascination, it shivered, and parleyed, and retreated, every motion a start, and every limb in a struggle of aversion that protracted the misery it endeavoured to shun in vain. At length with a vehement impulse he snatched the dagger, to which its hand had been often involuntarily directed, and threw it from him with the force of one who wishes to remove from him an object of temptation, and appeared to regard it for some time as a respite from internal persecution, but in a short time the influence appeared to operate again, again he appeared to make the faint yet desperate struggles of one who knows that

that all struggles are bootless. With a quivering and yet a straining motion he approached the place where the dagger lay; often receding, his feet bore him to the spot; often wincing at the touch, his hand at length grasped it strenuously; but then all further power or means of delay seemed to cease. The figure rose severely erect, as if every nerve were forcibly dilated, and the whole man wretched and wound to a pitch of unnatural energy, and then moved away with a motion, which an effort at swiftness, struggling with the warped and contracted state of the muscles, rendered frightful. The figure and his motions conveyed one idea so powerfully to Ippolito that, on his disappearing, he exclaimed aloud, "he is going to murder some one!" Almost as he spake, a cry came to his ear, not like the cry of individual agony, but as if all the terrors of a last dying groan were mixed
with

with the shriek of those who look upon some direful thing. Ippolito's hair stood erect at that sound. The figure reappeared, his actions now were the ravings of despair, his garments were splashed with blood, and he held the dagger with the gesture of one whose horror has rendered him insensible that he holds the witness of his condemnation. A confused sound was then heard, and several dim figures appeared on the tablet, Ippolito heard the rattling of chains, mixed with the toll of a bell, and that hum of preparation which accompanies some event of moment, the agonies of the phantom seemed to redouble, and Ippolito instantly comprehended that the punishment of his crime was approaching. In a short time, figures in the habits of executioners surrounded him, in the struggles of despair he broke from their gripe, and falling on his knees and stretching out his arms with

with the gesture of one who addresses heaven, not to appeal, but to accuse, the covering fell from *his face*, and Montorio darting towards him beheld *his own*. The figures disappeared, the sheet of blue fire closed over the tablet, and sinking into the floor with a faint hiss, expired. Ippolito was silent for some moments, from the struggle of feelings that almost suffocated him; at length rage, and amazement, and horror, found vent in a storm of execration and fury. It is impossible to conceive with what abhorrence his mind, so high-toned, so ambitious, even romantic in virtue, and impracticably rigid in its system of honour, with what abhorrence it must have struggled with the idea of undergoing the vilest of punishments for the vilest of crimes. There is a delicacy too, taught by early luxury, and the indulgences and exemptions of rank, that shrinks from the *debasing circum-*

stances which attend the commission and the punishment of a crime, with as much native antipathy as virtue feels at the crime itself, and which is often a security for the forbearance of evil in minds where the purer principle is absent. Ippolito was all outraged, and inflamed, and revolted, and the appearance of the stranger, on whose entrance the vault was lit again, only gave his rage an object. “Monster,” he roared, “was it for this I was drawn hither, to be abused by a wizard lie, a damned prediction, which no heavenly power could doom ! nor you, nor all your host of fiends, nor Satan himself, could tempt me to realize ? Was it for this I watched and waited, was it for this I resigned the peace of my existence, and the welfare of my soul, that I sought the haunts I believe of demons, and yielded myself up to *you*, their leader, thou Archimage, thou Beelzebub, prince of the devils,

to

to be told that I am—that I must be—
 Oh ! it choaks my utterance, it blasts my
 lungs to speak it—what?—a murderer;
 a skulking murderer ; dragged from his
 hiding-hole by the hands of the common
 executioner, that does his vile office on
 the beasts of the people—monster !”

The burning tears of rage burst
 out in spite of him, the stranger
 stood unmoved. “Whom do you ac-
 cuse? You *would behold* your fate, and
 you *have* beheld it.”—“Impossible!
 wretch ! liar ! impossible!—Do I not
 know myself? Would I not search out
 and stab with my sword, my very heart’s
 core, if it could harbour a thought of
 depravity? Had I been represented
 struggling with an open, armed foe; had
 I been represented acting in the fever of
 passion, (though even so I could not
 wound the unprepared,) had it been
 aught but this, I would have borne it,
 though the perspective was filled with
 racks

racks and fire. But this—what pretext—what device—what excuse?—I have not an enemy on earth; no, by heaven! I am as void of hatred as I am of fear. But why do I linger? Let me from this cursed den; the very air breathes lies and witchery; I am infected while I stay here; the very consciousness of a crime is stealing on me; I am tempted to do something vile and guilty; and may all the horrors, the indignities, the low-sunk depravity I am menaced with, fall on me, if I ever from this night enter your haunts, or have intercourse of any shape or circumstance, or any pretext or temptation with you or your associates, be they fiends, or impostors, or what they may; nay, if I do not from this night renounce all pursuit or search of this damned art, that curses alike with suspense or certainty.”—“Go,” said the stranger, still sternly calm, “go, and
6 the

the fulfilment of your curse go with you, for from henceforth it shall ever seem as if this vault indeed engulphed you, as if your view was bounded by its darkness, and your thoughts filled with its terrors; what you have seen or heard this night shall never leave your mind's eye; wherever you are you shall remember me."—"I will lose my memory first, in drunkenness or madness; I will drink mandragora and opium, I will have a drum beat on my head when the thought of you is there."—"That is but temporary, you will remember me in the hour of your guilt."—"Liar!"—"You will remember me in the dungeon."—Ippolito stoꝓt his ears.—"You will remember me on the scaffold, and the image of him you have murdered will be scarce more terrible than the image of him you have belied and spurned."

"The image of him I am to murder!"

said

said Ippolito, who had in vain endeavoured to shut out the deep voice of the stranger, “Where is it? Is it near me?”—“It is,” replied the unknown, “with myriads of other unclothed embryos of future horror; here the shapes of things untold are assembled; spirits that tempt, and spirits that punish, are here awaiting their task, and howling for their prey in these untravelled spaces. You cannot see their form, nor hear their sound as they sweep past you; yet how many are gathered around you now! For, on this signal night, myriads are assembled to attend their master and mine.” Ippolito, who was quitting the vault, though he knew neither passage nor direction, hesitated; his mind was in that state when the violence of its agitation is favourable to the most improbable and contradictory impressions, but in which it always seeks a relief to its distressed and overwrought

wrought frame in an extreme, and therefore if it deviate from one, certainly declines to another. At such a moment, the temptation of his habitual curiosity so critically suggested, and the near prospect of its gratification, combined with the impression of sincerity, which the stranger's unyielding calmness involuntarily conveyed to him, wrought a strange and sudden change in the whole frame of his feelings. He returned slowly, and faltered out, "Can you indeed shew me the form of him whom I am doomed—" he could not say to murder. "That I know not," said the stranger, who during their conference had never changed his posture or expression. "Unfeeling and unyielding that you are," said Ippolito, relapsing into passion, "is this my answer? Is this the way you relieve the wretch whom you upbraid for leaving you? Why should I stay? You have
 poured

poured fire into my brain, and poison in my heart, and now when I turn to the only resource you have left me, you mock me with a cold, lingering, doubtful answer. By whatever power you serve and fear, I adjure you, adjure you earnestly, terribly, by the convulsions of a broken spirit, by the ruins of a mind which none but you could bow down to weakness, I adjure you, grant me this last, wretched boon ; let me grow familiar with the wickedness of my own heart, nor feel these revoltings, as if the motions within me were caused by the possession of a demon."

The stranger spoke not, moved not, saw not, his arms were uplifted, his head thrown back, the whites only of his eyes were visible, and though not a limb moved, the folds of his garment rose and spread as if they partook of some inward motion. Ippolito, almost insensible of what he saw, and possessed but by one object,

object, repeated his importunities with aggravated vehemence ; again and again he grasped the unknown by the arm, and shook his garments, and shrieked his petition in the agonies of delirious impatience. “ Away ! ” groaned a voice, that seemed to come an immeasurable distance ; “ away ! I am with my master now ; he comes, he comes, where space neither measures nor reaches, through the viewless and the void.” Ippolito, inflamed not deterred, only raised his voice, and redoubled his eagerness ; his feelings became frenzy, his voice a roar, he supplicated, he menaced, he cursed, he defied with daring provocation, the presence of the master-spirit, and threatened with extermination the stranger, his ministers, the haunts of their resort, and every agent and instrument of their accursed doings. At this outrage the stranger shivered, and half starting from his trance, looked
around

around with a glazed, unawakened eye :
“ Who hath brought him here ? ” he murmured ; “ The terror of his presence be upon *him*. ” — “ Let them be upon me, ” raved Ippolito, “ let me have something to confront and to contend with ; I dare him ; he shrinks from me ; let him come ; if he be more terrible than these dens of horror have yet shewn me, if he be what I can but behold and die, if he blast my eyes with the livid lightning of hell, let him come ; I dare him ; does he hear me ? yes, I dare him ; let the echoes of his temple bear to him my shout, my laugh of defiance. ” He burst into a horrid laugh.

At these last sounds the stranger shrieked ; his shriek, so wild and unearthlike, was echoed from a hundred parts of the vault, and all the crowd of strange shapes, and many he had never before beheld, surrounded him in a moment ; the cavern rung with their cries, a commotion

motion like an earthquake shook every place and object, self-moved lights darted through the darkness; a sound like the moans of the dying, borne on the wind of midnight, rose, and increasing as it spread, filled the vault, till the maddened ear sought in vain the cause of its torture in the dizzy roar that oppressed it: Oh, there is no telling the terrors of that hour; if a being could be supposed to be plunged for a moment into Tophet, and retain his vital powers and reason, such I believe, would he describe it on his return, if the power of description remained to him. I recollect some expressions of Ippolito's which described it with the energy of personal suffering. "The very dead forms and characters that were on the walls, at this moment came to a horrid state of partial existence, they crawled and shuddered with a motion like life; the very reptiles, of size and form such as is never

never seen in the upper world, seemed endued with a strange consciousness, and rose erect some, and some uttered sound, and some looked and stared with ghastly intelligence."

Amid this scene what an object must Ippolito have presented, the bold and beautiful outline of his figure appearing amid the fires and darkness, and witched shapes of that meeting, his sword drawn, his habit thrown back, his eye and cheek kindling into frenzy, heightened with the peculiar wildness of supernatural terror. The stranger awoke from his trance; he arose; he grasped his arm, and looking on him with an eye that seemed to see other forms: "Come," said he, "you who compel the powers of the night, and of the nether world, come with me."—"Swear then, that you will shew me that form, the form of him who is to make me a villain; if I can but behold him, I will sit down in passive wretchedness,

edness, and resist no more ; shew me but that form—” “ You shall behold him.” —“ Lead me then where you will.”

Again he was led to a space so remote that it seemed as if the immense extent of this place was suddenly become doubly immense, yet their motion was so quick that the rage and uproar seemed to have ceased at once. No sound was near them, their steps did not seem to emit any, the damp and foggy dulness of the coarse medium which could scarce be called air, seemed to absorb every impression ; the single light the stranger bore, did not permit them to penetrate into the thick darkness, more than the arm could extend. They proceeded in utter silence ; there was a chilling remoteness from life, within and around them. Ippolito had no consciousness of any thing, till he found they had stopped and entered a dark chamber, or rather another rude recess in these
endless

endless passages. Some object, dark and muffled, lay in a corner; but Ippolito's sight had been too long stimulated by glaring and unnatural impressions to regard it. "In a few moments," said the unknown, "you will be cursed, like the rest of your species, with the fulfilment of your own wishes; what, in compassion to you, I would have withheld, I can now withhold no longer. The lord of the night, compelled by outrage and defiance, has come, in the fullness of his terrible potency he *has* come, and I am forced by that presence to deal with you without the mercy of reserve or delay."—"Therefore," said Ippolito with eager weariness, "I pray you be speedy; soon let me know what is yet to be done or suffered. I tell you I am in the very weakness of desperation! Do not therefore speak, for I can no longer hear; my head is hot, and my mind wondrous heavy. Let something be done, and
quickly,

quickly, while I am yet equal to it. I could, methinks, grasp at fire, or drink fresh blood, as if I were in the common ways and habits of nature. How long this searing of the mind will last, I know not; make your tool of me now, I am in your power.”—“There is something yet to be done,” said the stranger drawing very near him, “to recognize and to propitiate the presence of our master, a deed must be done, a deed without a name, which sounds foully in the ears of nature. Have you not sometime heard that the power with whom we deal requires the spilling of blood as the test?”—“I have heard of these things before,” said Ippolito speaking quick and low, and fixing his eyes on a point; “and the dreams that used to terrify childhood, are they become the acts of the man? those things so dark, so distant, are they indeed brought so near to me? Be it so: here is my sword, from
what

what part are the drops to be drawn that seal this mystery of iniquity?" He bared and held out his arm. "Not that," said the stranger, "it is not that; the sacrifice is already prepared, and you are not to be the victim, but the one who must offer it. Such victims with us are common; credulity or fear supplies them every day."

As he spoke, he approached that obscure object, and drew off part of the covering that concealed it. Ippolito beheld a naked human breast, the rest of the body, head, and limbs were concealed in a dark drapery, that fell also over the rude block, on which it appeared extended and fastened as on an altar. "Here is the victim prepared," said the stranger, "he cannot fly or resist, he cannot discover or upbraid; the movements of the dead are not further from the light or knowledge of life than what is done in this vault; here is the weapon," giving him
a small

a small dagger, “strike firm and sure, the presence of our master requires this attesting act, and all shall then be known.”—“Never,” replied Ippolito, awaking at once to the keenest and most exalted sense of feeling and reflexion, “never; what future horrors my fate may prepare for me I know not, nor what dreadful preparation a goaded mind and a devoted consciousness may steel me with; but while I have sense, and can hold a weapon with the steady hand of one who can aim, or who can forbear, never shall such an accursed deed be done by me.”—“Rash boy!” said the unknown, “you know not what depends on this moment; you know not whose presence makes these insensible walls burst out in an ominous dew, and this prepared taper burn tremulous and blue; you know not who beholds you now, summoned hither by the outrage, and now dismissed with the capricious infir-

mity of a mortal, *his* wrath will be terrible, my power will fail before him, his fangs will scatter your flesh like chaff, his breath will blast and shrivel your substance to an atom, you will be borne alive to his horrible haunt, the mock of his taloned imps, the torn, shrieking, and yet living feast of fiends.”—“ I hear your words,” said Ippolito, “ but my ears are stopped with horrid things, and I cannot distinguish them, nor am I longer able to speak or to reason. I will not do that accursed thing ; I will not harm that miserable object, though he can neither resist nor upbraid ; for myself, I am in *his* hands, whose hands can reach even here.”—“ Think, oh, yet think,” continued the unknown, “ of the alternative that awaits your obstinacy, if the more direful and violent extremity should not overtake you ; you must never quit this vault again—never. No human force or art can ever find or free you ; here you
must

must linger on the confines of the outer darkness, feeding despair with fearful shapes and sounds, so very near the nether world, that the horrid familiarity will make you forget your nature; and even while yet alive, and in the flesh, feel yourself becoming a demon, till on such a night as this you shall be nailed to a block like *him*, whom similar infirmity has brought here, to be put to a death you can neither see nor struggle against; and then to lie here, your rotting bones made instruments of such unhallowed doings, that their dead juices shall creep and curdle to be so abused, while no friend weeps or knows your end, and your miserable soul unabsolved, unblessed, unappeased. Oh, think of this!"—"I have thought—it is in vain; if one of your goblin ministers were howling temptation in my ears, while these horrors leave me a glimpse of will or reason, while I can draw a dagger, or

not draw it, I will not be a tame, resigned, voluntary villain."

"'Tis possible," said the tempter, "the malice of mercy may spare you to a worse fate; 'tis possible you may be dismissed from this chamber to linger out a long life of horrible expectation, for such it must be, with the consciousness of future guilt. You will neither have the preparation of definite knowledge to enable you to dare it with firmness, and to suffer with dignity, nor that partial reconciliation which long familiarity must produce with the most revolting objects, and which, if it do not leave the mind satisfied, at least renders it calm. No—instead of this, conscious that you must be guilty, you will try many modes of guilt, partly from curiosity, and partly from a vain hope to evade your allotted one; thus will you become hardened in evil, familiar with varieties of vice. Your mind, from its habitual contemplations, will be degraded
below

ed below that of an assassin or a robber. The contagion will extend to your manners and habits ; your whole character will sink into a squalid misery, a depraved dejection, a desponding meanness, a ruffian abandonment. Never knowing when you arise that the sun will not light you to a shameful death, you will bear for ever about you the curse and blast of existence, the self-watching torture of fear, that dreads to wake and dreads to sleep. In the morning you shall wish for evening, and in the evening you shall wish for morning, anxious for the day to pass that you may see it over without a crime, yet cursing it when it is past, that it has brought you nearer to inevitable misery. In every wind you will hear cries of pursuit, in every eye you will see a spy or an accuser, every straw that crosses your path shall seem like a weapon offered to you, the infant and the sleeper shall suggest to you a whisper

per of temptation ; your character, your feelings, your nature changed, low in vice and in wretchedness, you will crawl with conscious revoltings to the end of a long, long life, you will rush, shrieking with precipitate reluctance, on its guilty close, and you will perish in the sin for which the horrors of uncertain anticipation allowed you no time for repentance, and the degradation of your heart forbid the praise of fortitude or the solace of compassion. Such must be your life if you quit this chamber without seeing the face of your victim. But it is now in your power to command that sight, and if you do, its appearance will suggest to you so many circumstances of time, and place, and action, that you will have means to collect your powers ; your arm will be strong, your mind bold and awake, your energies collected, keen, intense ; you will be undisturbed by the rage of ignorance, the stupid curses of the vulgar ;

vulgar ; you will walk with a steady step to the end of life, and quit it with the mysterious dignity of one who, possessing a knowledge above nature, was enabled to act a part above it ; who, knowing more than mere man could know, acted as mere man could never have acted. And is not this worth the struggle of a moment ?”

While he spoke, he had insinuated the dagger into Ippolito’s hand, who, in the unconscious workings of his mind and body, grasped it intensely. The strong picture of wretched life was before his eyes, his heart was hot, and desperate, and wreckless. Before he knew the direction his hand had taken, he felt the blood gushing about the hilt of the dagger ; he heard the stifled, and broken, and peculiar moan of death ; he staggered, and shut his eyes ; he felt as if they were forced open again ; he looked, but could see nothing—there was a dead silence. At
length

length Ippolito stammered out, "I have done it! now fulfil what you promised, now let me see that figure."—"You shall," said the stranger in a voice whose tone made itself felt, even in that most horrible moment, "withdraw that covering and you shall behold it."—"Where! what! I am mazed! my head is throbbing—speak—quickly."—"Withdraw that covering, and you shall behold the face of your victim."—"Are you mad, or am I? What connection can there be between this miserable object and him whose form I was to see?"—"Look, and you shall see the very object, self, and form; not express, but actual." With hands that did not feel their own motion, he withdrew the covering from the face; it was dimmed and altered by the struggles of death—but he saw it; in that pale light, and with eyes that were seared and flashing, he knew it."

"What did he see?" demanded the inquisitor.

inquisitor. “I know not; whenever he but approaches the mention of it, his hand becomes illegible, his expressions grow wild. It is in vain to importune him for that name, he could as soon bring himself wittingly to do the deed itself, as disclose the object or circumstance of it, even to a brother.”—“What change of sorcery,” said the inquisitor, “what dark dealing is this? How could the sufferer in the wizard’s vault, and the being he was doomed to destroy at some future time, be the same? or how——” “And still more strange,” said Angellini, “from allusions in subsequent passages I can collect, that the dying face he saw in the vault was the face of a living man, a man yet living in this world, in no expectation or chance of death; nay, one who could by no means be supposed to be in or near that place, one who is yet alive and well known to him. Though he had felt his

F 3

hands

hands stiff with his blood, though he had seen the drawn features, the close set teeth, the broken and reverted eye, with all the terrible character of actual death upon him."

"It is all a riddle, dark and fearful. But still, was not his mind lightened by the thought, that what had passed that night could be but in vision? that if his victim was yet alive, he could not have perished in that dark chamber? Did no hope of deception, of imposture, of the infirmity of his senses spring up within him?"—

"Oh, no; it was only misery heightened by anticipation, and confirmed by certainty! He had read, and so have I, when perhaps our motive to such studies was curiosity, of some potent workings of that art, by which the spirits of the living are, with unheard of anguish to the sufferer, brought to the place and the power that requires them, and there are made, or seem to undergo in vision
and

and mist, whatever can be inflicted on the real corporal agent; and during this fearful divorce of soul and body, that the latter remains as in a deep sleep, which nothing can disturb or interrupt till its suffering tenant is restored by the power that divided them. Such things have we heard, and what would make the hair stand upright, if told, of the tortures of the more subtle part, whose powers of sensation are rendered inconceivably acute by this unnatural dissolution, to whom the state itself is a state of dark, dream-like suffering, through which they labour with a feeling of oppression feverous, and dim, and dense, such as accompanies the presence of the night-mare. To such a cause he persists to ascribe the appearances in the vault; for he firmly believes that terrible stranger a being not of this earth. Nor have I any means of contending with his belief; his actions and character, so far as
I have

I have been told them, have lapped me in wonder.”—“ Oh, Blessed Mother! Blessed Mother, have mercy on him! heal his mind and forgive his sins! Holy St. Agatha, have mercy! Holy St. Rosalia, have mercy on him!” He beat his breast and crossed himself, and Angellini joined in his aspirations. “ These papers,” said he, after a pause, “ I have since received, are all sudden starts of pain and terror, without connection, without subject. See how they are written; how the hand must have trembled that wrote these!

Fragments of Letters from Ippolito to Angellini.

“ My mind is become utterly waste and desolate; existence lies before me without form or colour. I am the man whose fate has been made known to him, who has no part in life but its close;
whose

whose thoughts bear him over the whole earth, without a passing glance, and set him down before the grave. And mine, where shall it be dug? Aye, there is the sting of death! I must lie in the dust, in the shadow of the gibbet and the wheel! Dying villains shall pray that their bones may not be thrown near mine! Oh, if this must be, that I could wrap my head in darkness, in deep death-like sleep, and pass away the term without a thought till my hour came on! and then to rush with blind arm, with headlong blow, that is struck before it is felt, and at the same moment to feel it returned home to my heart, sure and firm, before recollection return, while I am yet in the doubt of a horrid dream! before I hear the wonder, and the cry, and the tale; before I feel the cursed gaze of mankind on me, straining to see the murderer. And then to lie down, forgotten for ever, clean passed away from

from note or memory of man ; my name unknown, my grave in the sands of a desert. Oh, that it might be thus ! for though I must perish by a ruffian's fate, I have not a ruffian's heart. No, it is the very omnipotence of fate to thwart, to humble, to crush, to mix opposites that loath each other ; to bid the proud heart become acquainted with pollution and abject wretchedness. Never was a heart that kindled as mine did with the love of all that is dear to the young, the ardent, the high principled mind. My race of pleasure and glory seemed to be endless ; it was but next spring to quit the levities of Naples, to enter as a cadet with an assumed name into the Spanish service, and never to avow that of Montorio till the commandant should ask the name of the youth who had done some distinguished service : this was my purpose. And I must perish on a scaffold, or in a dungeon, where lives are crushed
out

out in silence and darkness! No, here there is no hope; no dignity can be given to an end like this; no decent pride of death. To die for some act that was the burst of passion, the excess of erring principle; to see among the multitude a thousand whose hearts are with you, who weep, and pray for, and bless you as your firm step ascends the scaffold; nay, to struggle madly for the chance of life, to grapple with the executioner, to spring over the edge of the platform, to dash with chains through the guard, to trust to the sympathy of the sheltering crowd for your escape; to do this, while only conscious of erring as many have erred, would be to me more delightful than life. But, pitiless heaven! must I be dragged with the meanness of guilt, the villain-visage, in whose lines I shall hear them, as I crawl along, tracing the characters of vice; my felon hands tied behind, while the confessor,

1

shuddering

shuddering at the monster, can hardly bid him not despair. This—this—Oh, blessed heaven! let me run mad! Will he not take these burning tears, this scattered hair, this broken heart, and spare me but the foul deed, spare me but the shame, the public curse, the public gaze, and I will bear the pain, silently, deeply, while nature will bear it!——

* * * * *

“ I am much in solitude; when I am forced to go amongst men, I often feel myself examining their faces with a suspicion that makes *them* shrink—and *me*, too, when I am conscious of it. I am, therefore, much in solitude; for who can bear the sight of the human face when once it has become offensive? Horrid thought is my only companion! the worst of that came to me last night. Was it only a passing thought of fear, or was it one of those dark intimations that latterly, I think, often visit me?

A mind

A mind in my state may well be conceived a fit medium for the agency of unearthly natures. I thought, for a moment, I was possessed; I did, for a moment, think it! In truth, there are such fightings within me, I feel I am yet so unlike what I am told I must be, my head has so many thoughts so like my former self, my heart has still so many pulses that are yet alive to the love of grace, that I almost doubt if ever I can wittingly do the unnatural deed—if ever I can have the heart to be a wretch. When these thoughts rise in me, I try to crush them; I shriek, I stamp, I beat my head; I say with a horrid laugh—these are no thoughts for the murderer! I must be wild, wreckless; hard as the rock, rough as the storm. I try to chase these cruel lingerings of my former nature, and be thoroughly, inveterately, the wretch I *ought* to be. It was in such a struggle last night (that almost drove
me

me to pray for the consummation of my wretchedness); for a moment I thought I was possessed; that the evil one had *not utterly* prevailed; that I would feel him hourly growing stronger within me, drying up the springs of nature, searing my conscience, and shutting up my soul, till—Oh, language cannot follow that thought! I was standing when it came to me, and I feared to look into the glass opposite me, lest I should see my breath inflamed, or my eyes glisten with strange intelligence, or my hairs pointed and tipt with fire, or my foot—Oh, this cannot, cannot surely last much longer!——

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“ I thought that I felt the worst; that long anticipation had made me familiar with all horrors; that in thought I had drank the dregs, and wrung them out. I was deceived; for our capacity of bearing pain is always deceiving us. Whom could I have believed who would have

have told me what I could support a short space back? Last night I had thought long on it; I went to bed; I slept. I dreamt that I had done it, that I had in very deed done it. Every hair on my head I felt distinctly upright; every nerve and muscle was strained and stiffened out; my eyes were coals of fire; my fingers were distended into talons; I was drenched with the sweat of deadly agony. Even in my sleep I felt I said, "Oh, reverse time, but for one moment! let this be *but to come*; let me be the thrall of horrible expectation for ever!" Sleep could not long continue. I awoke, awoke in transport, awoke exclaiming, "I am not a murderer!" It was long before my senses returned perfectly; but when they did, I remembered ere long I must feel this, and seek to waken from it in vain. Oh, then, I wished to pass life in such a dream, so I might never waken to such a conviction! My reason
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is much obscured ; mine eyes are strained and burning ; mine ears have a roar in them, like that of ocean, that is never diminished. Nature is dark to me, and mankind a spectre. Yet, yet, my sufferings are but begun !——

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For some time past I had a wretched resource, such as wretches have. Even that has failed me utterly. The events that have befallen me, the objects that surround me nightly, bear so little resemblance to reality, that often they appeared to me the images of a dream, a dark, haunted dream. For a moment I dared to think I was not doomed to be a murderer ! In the morning, those objects were as clear and palpable as any action I had ever witnessed or performed ; at evening, with the help of wine and high play, to which I forced myself, they became doubtful, and sometimes disappeared. What must that be to which
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the rage of drunkenness and of gaming is a relief? But last night and the night before, he appeared to me amid crowds to whom I had run for shelter in vain; he reminded me of the hour, he shewed the dagger, he scared all around, he bore me away. Oh, when I saw him break the last fence I had against him, I felt like the wrecked wretch, who at night-fall lights his few faggots to deter the wild beasts from approaching him, and sees by their blaze the tiger couching to spring over them and seize him. I have no power of resistance, no hope of escape; I am the prey of the powers of darkness! Oh, how terrible is this sinking of the soul, this closing round of the utter darkness!" * * * * *

Angellini was proceeding to examine more of these extraordinary papers, when he and his companion were startled by an unusual sound that murmured near them. They listened not in apprehension, for

for within the walls of the Inquisition there are no listeners but in curiosity. At that moment Angellini observed a remarkable change in the appearance of the sea, which was flowing beneath their windows; it suddenly retreated to a vast distance, leaving its bed bare and heaving, and stranding in a moment the numberless small vessels which were sailing or anchored in it in total security, and whose bulged and scattered fragments were spread over the surface as far as it was yet visible. Angellini and his companion were too well acquainted with the climate to be ignorant of the purport of these dreadful phenomena, and if they had, the loud and terrible cry that rose from the city and the shore would not have allowed them to be long so. They now could see distinctly crowds of people rushing to the shore from every quarter, they ran for refuge and safety, for in their houses it appeared impossible to
continue

continue longer ; but when they found the beach naked, the vessels destroyed, and the sea receding almost from their view, they stood aghast, and eyed each other in speechless despair.

Angellini, endeavouring to subdue the terrors of nature by the discharge of his official duties, recollected that unless the shocks were unusually violent, it was probable the fabric would resist them, and that at least while any work of man remained, a pile which had stood for centuries would be safe. While he was yet debating the probable direction of the next shock, he was stunned by a sound, which he in vain endeavoured to believe proceeded from the multitude on the shore ; it was the ocean returning in its strength, in a strength that seemed to threaten the bounds of nature. In the next moment they beheld it approaching as a mountain, the black concave of its waters darkening on the view like a cavern. Angel-
lini,

lini, who was hastening from the room, stood riveted to the spot for an instant of horrible expectation. It burst, and he felt the building shake to its base. It yet stood, however, and he rushed out to order the guard to remove the prisoners, who were lodged in chambers hollowed out of the rock beneath the foundations of the fabric, where he feared the sea, in these convulsive workings, might penetrate, and the inhabitants of them perish miserably. He gave his orders eagerly to the proper officer, who bowing profoundly, assured him “the prisoners were perfectly safe.”—“Safe!” repeated Angellini, “they are safe, indeed, from the power of man; but I wish to put them in a capacity of avoiding the most deplorable of all modes of destruction.”—“With submission, Signor, I apprehend it would be better policy to leave them where they are,” said the officer. “Policy!” said Angellini with
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some indignation, “this is rather a moment for humanity.”—“Of that I do not pretend to be a judge,” said the officer; “but were the prisoners of my mind, they would rather die where they are, than live to perish at the stake.”

Angellini had but just time to repeat his orders, when a second and a third shock made the walls around him vibrate visibly, while a large aperture yawning in that opposite him, he beheld through it the towers of the fabric tottering, and the inner court strewn with fragments of battlements and columns. All was now confusion and horror; the cries of the sufferers from the town were audible amid the tumult of destruction; but on the ministers of the Inquisition, callous from habitual misery, and frozen by a life of monotony, the effect was much diminished in point of terror and consternation: they moved with that stalking silence with which they traversed the pas-

sages on ordinary occasions. The prisoners whose situation exposed them to danger were by Angellini's direction placed in a court, where, though guarded, their motions were at liberty, should they be necessary to their own safety. Angellini, when half an hour had elapsed without a renewal of danger, began to examine the structure, whose gigantic strength had resisted a shock that had almost laid a city in ruins. The tower alone seemed shattered by the concussion; its inner front, which faced the court, was marked with some traces of injury, but the outer wall seemed shaken into ruins, for Angellini saw the bare and pointed ridges of the roof, and caught the gleams of the outer sky through the gratings which light had never penetrated before. He hastily demanded, had any one been confined in that tower? and was told it had been the prison of the young nobleman from Naples. He instantly

stantly ordered some of the officers to ascend the remains of the staircase, that hung fearfully pendulous, and visible on the outside of the fractured wall. They obeyed him, but after some delay returned with horror in their faces, affirming that of the prisoner there was not a vestige in any part of the building; they averred also, that it was impossible for him to have escaped by human means, for their own approach to his apartment had been only rendered practicable by the falling in of part of the building as they were ascending the stairs, which had enabled them with some difficulty and danger to reach and find his chamber empty.

From the looks and gestures which accompanied this information, and the whispers with which it was continued, the prisoners conjectured that it contained other circumstances still more extraordinary. Angellini, when it was concluded, raising his eyes to the ruin, so fearful and im-

passable, thought with a mixture of horror and compassion on the mysterious fate of this unfortunate young man, and for a moment submitted his strong mind to the belief of the marvellous things superstition had told of him.

CHAP. XIX.

I am now come from gazing on the sight :
 From bank to bank the red-swoln river roars.
 Crowds now are standing upon either shore
 In awful silence, not a sound is heard
 But the flood's awful voice, and from the city
 A dismal bell heard through the air by starts.

WHEN Annibal, still attended by Filippo, arrived at Capua, he learned that his relative resided at Puzzoli, where he had been removed for the enjoyment of a distinguished benefice. Disappointed by the delay, and alarmed by the danger of exposure,

exposure, he nevertheless was compelled, by the exigency of his finances, to pursue him to Puzzoli with this relative, who was his mother's uncle. Annibal had from his youth been a favourite, and what was of greater consequence, his father had long been the reverse, in consequence of some family disagreements: both from his fondness and resentment, therefore, he hoped for assistance, and, at least, believed himself secure of confidence and protection.

He therefore hastened to Puzzoli, and rested on his way at a small town in its neighbourhood, purporting to reach it the following day. Slight shocks of the preceding earthquake had been felt in the country, and a considerable degree of alarm prevailed among the inhabitants, which, as usual, they endeavoured to appease by ceremonies and processions. A river, that flowed near the town, had lately undergone such extraordinary changes,

changes, had swoln with such sudden violence, and then subsided without any apparent cause, that the people were not only terrified with the expectation of what these changes indicated, but with the more obvious danger it threatened to their lives and habitations. Annibal, who was shewn into a room of the inn which commanded a view of the river, saw not without solicitude and fear the rush of its dark, turbid waters, sometimes wrought into eddies, and sometimes checked by invisible obstructions, its roar often mingled with other sounds, of which the causes were unknown, and its waters flushed with the sullen sanguine hues of a sun, setting amid the clouds of a gathering storm. “Illustrious Signor,” said the host, entering with preparations for supper, “you have arrived at the most fortunate time imaginable; we have had threatenings of an earthquake and inundation these four days.”—

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“ You flatter me highly,” said Annibal jocularly. “ May I perish if I do, Signor,” said the man earnestly ; “ I think it by no means improbable that this roof may be in ruins over your head to-night.” — “ You must explain the mystery of this good fortune to me,” said Annibal smiling, “ I confess I am unable to comprehend how being buried in the ruins of your house is a subject on which I can congratulate myself.” — “ Why, Signor, is it possible you can live in Italy, and not know that whenever we are threatened with danger the abbess of the Ursuline convent and the prior of our monastery unite in a solemn procession to the river, and produce all their relics to prevent an inundation ; and that ceremonies are performed, and crowds collected, and such a multitude of strangers and spectators pours into the town to witness it, that if the inundation swept away half the town, the remainder are happier

happier for it all their life. It is quite a jubilee, I assure you, Signor, only that it occurs somewhat oftener; if Providence continues to favour us, as it has done of late, I expect to see scarce a house standing.”—“ You will allow me, however,” said Annibal, “ to quit yours before so desirable an event occurs, as I should be equally unwilling to prevent or to partake its good fortune.”

Shocked at the man's insensibility, and determined not to augment profits thus iniquitously desired, he quitted the house and wandered towards the river. It was now night, deepened by the darkness of a cloudy sky, and Annibal's mind, under the influence of time and place, involuntarily adopted a subject of congenial meditation. He thought of his strange fate, of events no conjecture could solve, and no contemplation could divest of terror; the precise frame of his mind was critical and dangerous, per-

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haps even more so than his brother's. Ippolito was always accustomed to act from impulse, Annibal from conviction. But impulse is more variable than conviction ; and therefore, though Ippolito's emotions were more vehement, his mind was much more disengaged than his brother's. He had no distinct belief of the character of his persecutor, nor any clear impressions of the influence exercised on himself ; he had never seriously debated whether it was the production of human or superhuman powers ; he resisted it merely because it was painful and atrocious ; instead of bending his mind to discover whether he was the victim of imposture or the agent of destiny ; he expended his energies in sallies of rage and convulsions of resistance. Into the deeper mind of Annibal, one conviction had radically wrought itself, that of his being visited by the inmate of another world. What relief he had enjoyed under

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der this terrible impression was merely local and furtive, produced by change of place and vicissitudes of action, violent and sudden: but the impression remained slumbering, but not extinct, ready to resume its force and character whenever the cause that had produced it should recur. Hence, while Ippolito was almost in despair, his very violence of nature formed a security against the object he dreaded, as poison is often expelled by the convulsions it produces; while Annibal, whose tranquillity seemed almost unimpaired, nourished an unsuspected tendency to the very deed, from whose remote apprehension the frame of his mind flattered him with a treacherous immunity. He walked alone. His mental debate, which occupied some hours, might be reduced to the following propositions: "I have seen a departed spirit, an inhabitant of those regions which are invisible to man; I cannot resist the evidences

dences of his appearance and ministry ; I draw them as much from the circumstances that preceded and followed, as from those that accompanied it. There was a regularity of disposition, a subordination of parts, a progress of development, which indicate the agency of an intelligent being ; and if intelligent, certainly not human. He prompts me to a crime, revolting to nature and fatal to my own life, reputation, and perhaps immortal interests. I have resisted him, for it requires no debate to reject evil so positive and heinous ; I have resisted him hitherto ; but who can tell how long he may resist a being whose powers are the powers of another world ? nay, who can tell how far he is right in resisting him ? Distance of place has in a measure relieved me from this persecution ; but should he pursue me where I am flying, I feel I have no further resource, no remaining powers of defence ; the evidence

dence of his character, the truth of his commission, it will then be no longer possible to resist. Far be that day from me, Oh, heaven! In my present state my misery is solitary and incommunicable; I have no associate, I *can* have none; for unimaginable distress there is no sympathy; he who has felt as I do might pity me; but where shall I find him? What being is there who holds communication authentic and avowed with the world of spirits? None! The tenderest friend or relative must regard me as a visionary, a madman, or an impostor, and to my other sufferings I need not voluntarily add contempt. To implore the aids of the church is equally hopeless; the consequence of confession would probably be immurement in the Inquisition! they would listen to me, not as one for whom something was to be done, but from whom something was to be learned; they would listen to the
tale

tale of suffering or of guilt, only for the sake of considering how far the interest of the church might be promoted by the issue of the affair. I should be ever afterwards to *them* an object of vigilance and suspicion, they would presume on my distress to predominate over my freedom and my intellects ; they would macerate my body and enfeeble my mind ; and, after all, if my persecution be not a visionary one, they would fail to protect me from it, and if it be I am able to protect myself."

He was pleased with the result of his meditation ; for though he had not adopted any resolution, he had appeared to think with the vigour of resolution : he had, in fact, anchored without a bottom, but the increasing crowds and noise would have prevented any further exercise of mind, had he been disposed to it. He found, according to his host's account, multitudes assembled, and multitudes more assembling,

bling, though it was now near midnight, and the appearance both of the sky and the waters was menacing. *They* heeded it not, the triumph of seeing their saints acquainting the river in the rage of inundation, “that thus far should he go and no further,” was heightened by the increased wealth and consequence which this confluence of strangers gave their town, and both were exalted by that love of pleasure, and sensibility of external objects, for which the Italians are distinguished, and which the desire to gratify must be incalculably powerful in a people, who enjoy but few spectacles of splendour, or opportunities of festivity, but what religion affords them. Annibal was drawn along by the crowd, and learned among them that the Abbess and her train were to come from a neighbouring convent, with relics of peculiar virtue; that they were to be met at the entrance of the town by the religious orders

orders who inhabited it, and that both were to march with united forces to the very brink of the river, and pronounce a solemn interdiction of its further outrages. Annibal, who was a good Catholic, believed his mind would be refreshed, as well as his senses delighted, by this act of religion, and therefore willingly mingled in the crowd, amused even by the preparations for the ceremony, by the murmur and concourse of so vast a multitude, over whose visages, tinged with various shadowings of confidence and fear, the torches by which they were seen, flung an expression wildly animated and picturesque.

Through the darkness of the night he could see distinctly the lights that twinkled from the convent, and often he listened to catch the chaunt of their solemn service, as the low, intermitted gale breathed past him, but could only hear the roarings of the river, which filled up the hushed
murmurs

murmurs of the crowd, with a sound strange and deep; at length a bell from the convent, which was caught and answered by those in the town, gave signal that the procession had set out. The crowd pressed forward to meet and join it, and Annibal was borne on by the rest. It was marked by every circumstance of fantastic splendour, by which the unhappy inmates of a convent try to diversify hopeless monotony, and employ the talents which are denied their proper and social exercise. All the wealth of the convent was displayed, several nuns were arrayed in the habits and characters of those whose relics they bore. The Abbess herself, assisted by four lay-sisters, supported an enormous piece of tapestry, embroidered with the life of their patroness, St. Ursula, whose figure in wax, larger than the life, and blazing with jewels, followed in the rear of her own achievements. But the
multitude

multitude forgot every other object when the procession closed with a figure, such as their eyes never before had beheld : it was a lay-sister, habited as the genius of martyrdom, and bearing a relic of more value than the whole wealth of the convent, it was the head of St. Catharine, which by particular providence had found its way from Alexandria, where it had been severed from her body, in the reign of the tyrant Maximin, to Italy. This saint had a special antipathy to inundations and earthquakes, which she took care to manifest in so spirited a manner, that the river had upon all former occasions paid the highest deference to her hydrophobia, by instantly retreating to its natural current. This inestimable relic, set in gold, and placed in a crystal case, never had attracted the attention of the faithful so little. They hung upon, they blessed, they almost worshipped.

shipped the beautiful representative of martyrdom. She was placed aloft, on a car of curious construction; it was entirely composed of racks, crosses, and instruments of death and torture, woven with such skilful intricacy as to preserve their distinct forms, and yet form a spacious vehicle; at due intervals imps of temptation and punishment were peeping at the genius with faces of ugly malignity, and derisive grimace. She stood in the centre of the machine, in the attitude of trampling on the terrible apparatus, on which she cast from time to time looks of contempt, such as the serenity of angelic beauty may spare. A robe of white floated round her like a cloud, one hand held the head of St. Catharine, the other waved a branch of amaranth, her locks were wreathed with a coronal of palms, and her eyes were upturned to a resplendent figure, which, bending from the canopy of purple, extended

tended to her a crown of gems, and pointed her view to heaven. Her form breathed immortality, her vestments seemed to emit light as they moved on a face pale with early confinement and habitual sorrow, the murmurs of adoration, the awakened consciousness of beauty, and the enthusiasm of religious drama, had kindled a radiance that seemed borrowed from the regions her view was directed to. The faithful felt their devotion exalted, and the libertine was converted, as they beheld her. By a singular chance her face was concealed from Annibal as her car passed the spot where he stood. He was again borne on by the multitude, who hastened to the river, on the bank of which the religious orders were already assembled; the solemn sound of their chaunting mixing with its roar, and their line of dark forms, so diversified by the shadowy picturings of torch-light, here heaped
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in tumultuous darkness, and there flashing out in abrupt and fantastic light, that the eye sought in vain for a resemblance to known or common objects, and struggled to believe itself in the regions of life. After prayer and hymn, the various relics were exposed, that of St. Catharine was reserved for the last. At length the genius descended, and through crowds that prostrated themselves before her in doubtful devotion, advanced to the brink of the river. After a short prayer she exposed the sacred head to the waters, and waved it with a gesture of inspiring command. At that moment, the night and the dark surface of the waters were swept by a glare of sudden light, a meteor low-hung and lurid passed over the upturned visages of the multitude, and disappearing in the darkness, left a train of bluish sparkles behind. The crowd, in the joy of confidence, believing it to

be a signal of divine acceptance, burst into a shout of triumph, and the genius, flushed with the radiance of inspiration, turned to ascend her car, with a step that seemed to discard the earth. Her veil floated back with the elevation of her motion; Annibal beheld her face, without a shade or interruption, it was the face of Erminia, the original of the picture cherished by fantastic passion, and preserved without a hope of discovery. Carried beyond himself, he rushed through the crowd, he called on her in a voice the murmur of thousands could not suppress, he addressed her in alternate rapture and awe, he invoked her as an angel of light, and supplicated her as the beloved of his heart. The crowd, incensed and astonished, collected round him in numbers, which he strove to break through in vain, but still he contended, expostulated, and intreated, and holding out the pic-

ture, bid them behold a resistless witness of the truth of his passion, and the identity of its object. The crowd still surrounded and repelled, but he still spoke with more vivid eloquence, more animated passion, for he could perceive, at this moment, that the object he addressed, amid the pomp of procession, and the triumph almost of deification, had paused, and beheld him with a look in which surprize was quite unmixed with anger. Emboldened, he burst from the crowd with sudden strength, and implored her but to pause, but to listen. His story was wild, but true; he had seen her picture where she had perhaps never been. He had devoted his heart to the resemblance, and his life to the pursuit of her; he had unexpectedly, miraculously found her, and again he poured out before her, in tones no woman could hear unmoved, his passion, heightened by visionary feeling, and romantic discovery.

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But at this moment the murmurs of the crowd, and the angry interference of the ecclesiastics, were lost in an universal roar of horror, and a rush of sudden flight, that, like the torrent it shunned, bore every thing before it. The river, with no physical cause, but subterraneous and invisible convulsions, suddenly rose with the rage of a tempest, and bearing down bank and mound, poured a waste of watery ruin on every side. There is a darkness of distress, a helplessness of resistance, an obscurity of fear, in the dread of perishing by water, such as are not found in even more terrible modes of destruction; but here, where safety was obstructed by multitudes, and the horrors of desolation were aggravated by recent triumph, where the eye dreaded even darkness as danger, and the foot knew not in what element its next step would be plunged; the confusion and terror were

were beyond all power of description, and Annibal felt himself hurried into involuntary safety, while his eyes were yet strained to discover the situation of her, to perish with whom was the only thought of the moment. The torrent of flight, however, which he resisted in vain, never ceased, till he was almost in the centre of the town, where the bed-ridden and diseased were at that moment lamenting their absence from a ceremony from which they never could have escaped with life. Here the crowd paused to be assured of their safety, and Annibal, taking advantage of the first power of voluntary motion, hastened back to the spot which he feared he would now visit in vain. He was often obstructed by groups of fugitives, who still ran, though they were far from danger, but when he came near the brink of the water, which was now extended to the suburbs of the town, all was

desolation, still and dark, save for the hoarse dashing of the waters, contending with obstructions it had not yet removed, and the solitary, intermitted shriek of some wanderer, whom even the terrors of the scene could not drive away from calling on the names of those they could hope to see no more, and pausing to distinguish was it the cry of death, or only the sullen rush of the water that answered them. He had wandered along the margin of the waters, sometimes climbing over the remains of half-demolished buildings, and sometimes wading through shallows, encumbered by corses. He had no name to call on ; and over the dark and tossing waste before him, no power of sight could discover any thing but occasional streaks of light, where the yet unextinguished torches blazed on casual eminences, or were suspended from casements to assist the sufferers. At length,
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on a bank he descried a number of people who appeared to have forgotten their personal sufferings in some object of distinguished distress ; when he reached the spot he discovered it.

The ruins of a bridge, which had once joined the shore, were now scarce seen in the midtide of the stream ; arch after arch had yielded to the force of the torrent, and but a segment of the last yet remained, over whose rent and tottering fragments, every successive burst of the flood left a trace of foam higher than the last, a form was visible on the extreme ridge. Sometimes it was seen with a despairing hand, to wave a part of its garment towards the shore, from which it was only answered with outspread arms and fruitless cries. Annibal, bending from the bank, gazed on it ; his sight, quickened by fear, could not fail : with a cry, in which anguish was wildly mixed with joy, he tore off his mantle, and plunged

into the stream. He was a dexterous and bold swimmer, but had never before encountered such difficulties. The currents were adverse and irregular, the depths uncertain, and the obstacles (arising from fragments of trees, buildings, and human corpses, which floated on the tide, or rose in eddying masses,) were such as neither skill nor strength could easily contend with; but as he struggled onward, every moment stimulated his efforts, for every moment the form became more distinct, and the distress more acute. With incredible exertions, he had reached the single and tottering arch; he grasped its projecting fragments, which he felt loose in his grasp, and in accents scarce audible, besought her to throw herself into his arms, while yet it was possible for him to save her. In the stupor of fear, she appeared to listen without a capacity of effort, till fragment after fragment
crumbling

crumbling from her hold, and the dashing of the spray rising to her breast, and Annibal's despairing adjurations almost lost in the deepening rush of the waters, she ceased to cling to the ruin, rather from weakness than energy, and sank into his arms. He received her with a mixture of joy and terror, but when he saw the dark waste he had to repass, his strength diminished, his burthen increased, and the roar of the waters deepening round him, his heart sank within him, and his efforts became the blind strivings of despair. Still, however, he struggled onward, but obstructions increased; he had no longer any definite point to fix on or to reach; the shore seemed removed to an endless distance. He plunged on without regular effort or object, till anguish succeeding to hope, and courage exhausted on invincible difficulty, all recollection forsook him, and he dimly remembered, as in a dream,
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that he still held *her* he could no longer save, even when the waters were closing over their heads, and, to perish together, was all that hope could promise.

When he recovered his faculties, he believed himself in the regions of death ; all was dark, and cold, and silent : he lay for some moments in strange expectation, till he felt the warmth of life returning, and was assured that he still existed. He arose, he felt his limbs stiff and drenched, but capable of motion ; he felt his way before him, and his hands touched walls that were damp and stony ; he called aloud, but his voice was repressed, as if by low roofs and a contracted space. As he still proceeded, he distinctly perceived steps retreating before him ; he again called on the person he believed so near him, and was answered by a faint cry of fear, from a voice that made him pursue it as if he were winged. At that moment, the
vault

vault he was traversing, opening above his head, the first beams of a wan, beclouded moon fell through the chasm, and discovered a female figure standing near him, in an attitude of flight and terror. Annibal advanced, and the female again attempted to fly, though evidently scarce able to stand. Annibal flung himself on his knees, and throwing away his sword, addressed her in a voice and attitude to disarm all fear; he adjured her not to fly from one who had lately hazarded life to preserve her. He mingled the tenderness of passion with the strength of reason; told her that amid danger, to fly from protection was madness, and whispered that to convert that protection into a duty, and to sanction love by religion, had been the purpose that animated his search, and that even *now* made darkness and terror delightful, since they favoured the opportunity of urging it. The lady made

no

no reply, but listened with that gracious silence, more flattering than speech to the pleadings of a lover. Annibal now venturing to rise and approach her, implored her to permit him to lead her to some place of safety, and to avail herself of the opportunity yet afforded them, by disclosing her name and circumstances. “By those long and beautiful tresses,” said he, venturing to touch them, “I perceive you are not yet a nun; flatter the boldness this moment teaches me, and tell me you never will be one. If your vows are not irrevocable, my rank is high, and my family has influence to absolve you from ordinary engagements.” As he spoke, he ventured still nearer, he wrung the wet from her dripping hair, and rending off his vest, wrapt it round her, and as still she shuddered, almost supported her in his arms. Though trembling at her own temerity, she neither shrunk
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from his touch, nor rejected his services, and at length murmured in a voice of music, "I am not a nun, I am a novice in the Ursuline Convent, I am unhappy, but I scarce knew it till this night. I know I should thank you for preserving my life, but the effort to address you deprives me of all power of speech; and I scarce regret it, when I recollect that perhaps I have already said too much."

On Annibal's mind, the effect of these few words, delivered with pause, and tremor, and hesitation, was beyond all he yet had heard of language, or imagined of eloquence. He prepared to answer her but found that the tremor of which she complained, had extended to himself. But to the speechless tenderness of passion, which would expend hours without an articulate sound, there was now no time; the waters were yet rushing over their heads, and they perceived that the place to

which they had been thus miraculously conveyed, would afford them shelter no longer. They hastened therefore to quit it, and perceived that they were among baths in the extremity of the town, which had been deluged in the first fury of the flood, which was now departing from them, and whose retiring tides yet terrified them, though a pledge of safety. They emerged from them with some difficulty, and found themselves about the dawn of morning on the verge of a spot which had once been a vineyard, but which was now a shapeless marsh. A little further boats were plying amid recent gardens, and often entangling their oars in the vestments and corpses of their owners; and near them a group of ecclesiastics were employed, some in offering rewards for gems and relics that had been lost the preceding night, and others with impotent superstition, displaying those that had escaped, to check the
further

further progress of mischief. A band of these, among whom was the confessor of the Ursuline convent, recognizing the companion of Annibal, hastily advanced; and reclaimed her. Exhausted with fatigue and emotion, she sunk into the arms of the monks, and Annibal in vain watched to read in her closing eye, an invitation to pursuit, or a promise of hope.

Spent with the struggles of the night he was now returning, but the streets were yet full of wailings he could not hear without pausing, and of miseries he could not pass without an effort to relieve; he therefore continued to wander amid the scene of devastation; affording all the assistance his strength yet could spare, and when that failed; directing those whose distraction had rendered their exertions desultory and inefficient. As he was thus employed, he observed a person at some distance, who sprung from crag to crag, and from
ruin

ruin to ruin, with a giddiness that seemed to mock at danger, yet apparently without any definite object. His gestures were so wild, and his velocity so restless, that Annibal for a moment believed him to be some one, whom the late disasters had bereft of reason. He was not mistaken in the conjecture, though his senses, impaired by fatigue, had failed to recognize the object ; it was his faithful Filippo, who, frantic at the absence of his master, had flown from place to place in quest of him all night, till his exhausted strength scarce sufficed to bear him to Annibal's feet, to gasp out the joy, the expression of which almost killed him. They returned together through the remaining streets. Of the inn, where they had arrived the preceding night, there was not now a vestige, and it was with difficulty they procured from the dismayed and scattered inhabitants, the refreshments their
fatigue

fatigue and weakness could no longer want.

In the dream which visited the long and placid sleep of Annibal, the angel form of the novice floated in a thousand lights and attitudes. Sometimes she moved before him in majesty, and sometimes witched him with a smile, sometimes he caught the skirt of her robe, which was luminous as a cloud, sometimes a tress of her hair, and sometimes her milky arms, whose softness seemed to bend at his touch. Lapt in the luxury of vision, he almost resisted the return of his faculties, till he remembered a resolution he had formed on separating from her, of immediately repairing to the convent, to learn her name and rank, and interpose, if possible, to prevent the obstruction her situation threatened to his hopes and his passion. It was evening when he arrived at the convent; much of the day had passed in repose, and much in preparation to wait on the Abbess, for
he

he had no credentials but his person and address, which, in spite of recent fatigue and previous suffering, were still powerfully conciliating. But when he arrived he found the community engaged in a solemn service, of which the object was to deprecate the continuance or repetition of the late terrible visitation, and implore forgiveness for the sins for which it had been inflicted. Annibal lingered near the walls, in hope of distinguishing the voice of the beautiful novice amid the solemn swell of sound that rose at intervals on the stillness of evening.

In the interval of his next visit to the convent, he had sufficiently subdued the impetuosity of his feelings to recollect, that to alarm the Abbess by precipitate inquiries, and eager admiration, would be only to defeat or delay his pursuit ; when he was admitted, therefore, on the following day, he confined himself to asking with ill-affected
indif-

indifference, the name, rank, and relatives of the novice, who had at the late festival, personated the genius of martyrdom. The Abbess answered with a trepidation, which shewed that she endeavoured to conceal under embarrassed silence, her knowledge of a subject secret or important unexpectedly revived. She informed him that the novice was named Ildefonsa Mauzoli, that her birth was mean and shameful, that she had been consigned to a monastic life by authority she could not resist, and that she was now in the last week of her noviciate. Annibal, shocked at the near prospect of his loss, now disclosed his rank and his passion, but still suppressed his name, he warned her not to trifle with his feelings by false intelligence, or imperious measures; he told her of his high ecclesiastical interest, from the influence of which he had no doubt of obtaining a dispensation from the

VOWS

vows of Ildefonsa, even if she were a novice; he indignantly demanded by what power could she be devoted to a conventual life, exclusive of her own consent, and refused to credit the particulars of her birth, fortunes, and monastic choice, unless confirmed by herself. The abbess, incensed in her turn, demanded by what right a stranger broke into her sanctuary, to affront her veracity, and dispute her jurisdiction; she blamed herself for the condescension which he had abused, and sternly refused to permit him to see or speak with Ildefonsa. Annibal, alarmed for the consequences of power united with malevolence, began to mingle apologies for his vehemence, with continued intimations of his rank and influence, and of the danger of proceeding with precipitation, which that influence might make her repent and reverse. “Away, Cavalier!” said the abbess, “and when
next

next you disturb the peace of consecrated walls, let it be with pretences at least less shallow than a tale of rank, you cannot even confirm by the disclosure of your name, and a menace of influence, which, whatever be its power, can scarce annul the ties between a recluse and her God." As she spake she rose to depart, and Annibal quitted the convent tormented with that peculiar fear which dreads secret malignity and unconjectured machinations.

A thousand times he lamented the precipitate harshness of his language to the abbess, yet reflected that whatever had been his language, the intelligence would probably have been the same, that still she would have delighted in the exercise of petty tyranny, and the infliction of arbitrary misery. His future conduct he knew not how to direct; he dreaded the idea of quitting the neighbourhood, least some advantage might be taken of his absence; yet to stay was
useless,

useless, for from personal influence nothing was to be hoped. Amid all his plans he was astonished at his own temerity, thus disposing of life, while of life he was almost uncertain, and meditating the liberation and possession of an object to whom he yet knew not but he might be an object of indifference. But that his hopes were romantic, was no discouragement to him; he took a flattering omen from the extraordinary events in which he had been engaged; he thought that in every thing strange and difficult there was a spirit congenial to real passion. He would not purchase the prize it promised him but on terms of difficulty and enterprise, as the children of an ancient nation were not permitted to taste their food till they had earned it by the effort of bringing it down with their arrows from the summit of a tree. But immediate decision on his movements was necessary, and he decided with all the judgment he possessed.

He

He dismissed Filippo to Puzzoli to his uncle, with letters in which he explained, but not fully, his situation, excused his absence by stating his apprehensions for the safety of the lady, and intreated his uncle's interference with the abbess, and the bishop of the diocese, or, if necessary, with higher authority, to prevent devotion to a monastic life in an object of whom he strongly suspected the reluctance to it, and whose loss would consign him to despair. The strange and hasty vicissitudes of his life from tranquillity to danger, and from death to love, he endeavoured to palliate without revealing what he believed of the crimes of his father, or what he knew of his own dark persecution. When he had dismissed Filippo, though it was now night, he hastened back to the convent, to gaze on the walls that enclosed Ildefonsa, and enjoy that nameless delight which passion indulges in

in being near those it yet cannot see. The night was dark; he wandered round the walls at an unsuspected distance, till grown bold from security he approached close to them, and as light after light disappeared from the narrow windows, delighted himself with thinking he could discover the habitation of Ildefonsa, or imagine her employments, among which he dreamed a thought of *him* might sometimes steal upon the solemnity of mingled worship, or the lonely orisons of the cell. As he yet lingered, the noise of something falling lightly at his feet aroused him; he stooped, and picked up a flower, which as he held in his hand he perceived to contain a small paper buried in the petal. He in vain endeavoured to distinguish the writing, but convinced that it contained something more than fancy had yet promised, he hastened back to the inn, guarding the paper by a thousand superfluous precautions,

cautions, and calling for a taper, locked himself into his apartment, and sat down to feast in solitude.

The billet, which was intricately folded, contained the following lines: "Whether I am wrong in writing thus, I know not, but I fear I shall scarce condemn myself if I am. If I do not misunderstand your expressions, they intimate that I am to you the object of a passion which I yet know only by name, but of which I fear I shall not much longer be ignorant. Thus dangerous is it to see you; but greater dangers beset and terrify me. I am surrounded by enemies and by snares, which alone I resist in vain. Helpless and dismayed, I fly to the first arm that is extended for protection. Should you betray me, remember there is no honour in oppressing solitary weakness. The same reasons impel me to fear and to trust you. Heaven protect me, I know not what I do! At the extremity of the

west wall of the garden there is a breach, occasioned by the late commotions, which has not been repaired; it is almost concealed by laurel and arbutus, but to-morrow night there will be a moon, and you can discover it. I will be there, for liberty to walk in the garden till a late hour is still allowed me. I write by stealth and with difficulty; I dreaded least this note should escape you, and enclosed it in a tuberose to ascertain its descent. At the same hour to-morrow evening, in the same place, a tuberose will fall at your feet, if it be possible for me to repair to the garden, if not, I shall drop a cluster of violets from the grating. But is this a dream, such as sometimes float on the mists of my cell, or shall I indeed see you there, and forget while I see you that I am the persecuted, the disowned, the oppressed Ildelfonsa Mauzoli."

Over these lines, perused a thousand times,

times, and folded next his heart, Annibal vainly tried to sleep. He rose, and lighting the taper he had extinguished, to read it, sat down again to its perusal; while he held it in his hand, he felt as if he had a treasure which the lapse of ages could not exhaust; yet when again impelled by unsated curiosity, he again read it, he felt that its contents were brief and ineffectual.

The day passed in anticipations of delight, and when the moon rose he hasted to the convent. He reached unobserved the foot of the turret, where he had stood the preceding night, and had not been there many moments when a tuberosa fell at his feet; he scarce gave himself time for an exclamation of rapture, and hastened to the appointed spot. There is no telling but to lovers the tumult with which he watched for her steps amid the murmurs of the foliage, and the eagerness with which he sprung forward when
the

the tremulous glittering of moonlight falling on the light leaves of an acacia, made him believe he saw her white garments floating near him. At length she arrived. The first meeting of youthful lovers may well be imagined ; the inarticulate murmurs that spake more than language, the looks still more eloquent than they ; the sighs of vestal beauty breathed through the fragrance of a moonlight bower, her cheek kindling in its ray, her eye wandering but not withdrawn, her steps hesitating yet lingering, timidity flushing into confidence, and sudden tenderness checked by timidity, her whole frame trembling in the alternate sway of fear and love. And, on the other hand, a young man, unlike any of his species she had ever before beheld, with all the animation of courage, and all the attractions of beauty, who promised liberation and who whispered love, it was not in nature to resist it ; the time,

the

the place breathed to them such thoughts as were perilous to hear; upon love confidence is soon engrafted, and Ildefonsa related her wild and simple story to Anibal before they separated.

“ My infant faculties must have developed soon,” said she, “ for while almost unable to walk, I recollect perfectly being every day caressed by a lady whose form and mien were so different from those of the inmates of the cottage where I was nursed, that I invented in infantine endearment a new term to distinguish her, and the sensations with which her presence always inspired me. As I grew up, other circumstances caught my attention. The lady’s visits were always in the evening, they were passed in tears and lamentations, and ended in a hurried departure. I also observed my dress and food to be different from those of the people with whom I lived, whose attention, though always assiduous and affectionate, was

redoubled on every visit from the lady. When I was about five years old, I was also visited by a cavalier, who lavished on me the same tenderness and grief as the lady. At length I was suddenly removed, and for some time wandered through the apartments of a magnificent castle, where solemnity and sorrow reigned in every room, and where I saw the cavalier and the lady for a few moments together ; they stood at opposite ends of the room, surveying each other with looks of which I still remember that the anguish was mixed with distracting fondness. Their souls seemed rushing into their eyes ; looks were all they durst indulge in ; each looked as if to speak was to be undone ; it was in vain I ran from one to another, endeavouring with childish blandishments to soothe the distress I did not understand, and could not bear to behold. Children are apt to be impressed by clamorous grief and violent

lent

lent exhibition, but on me this scene of silent agony made an impression never to be effaced. After this I returned to the cottage, and was visited and caressed as usual, till one night, one terrible night, never to be explained or forgotten, the cavalier came to the cottage with an air of distraction, and placing me before him on his horse, plunged into the forest at the close of evening. My thoughts were disengaged, and though disturbed I was not terrified. I employed myself in observing the furniture of the horse and his rider, which were sumptuous and warlike. We were now within sight of the turrets of a castle, which, tinged with the last light of day, rose over the dark forest tops, when several ruffians rushed on the cavalier from a thicket we were passing through. They were no common murderers, it was no common spirit of vengeance and horror that flashed from their visages and deepened their howl of

wild delight. Afterwards I remember nothing distinctly. Mine eyes were blinded by the glare of steel, mine ears were stunned by sounds which I echoed in convulsions of fear, around me were only the cries of slaughter and the strife of despair. I was thrown aside as one who was neither remembered to injure or to spare: the horrors of the struggle I do not recollect clearly, but he must have fallen before so many assailants. When my faculties returned, I found myself again in the cottage; I cast my eyes around timidly, and saw one of the bloody forms of the forest bending over the embers of a fire. I closed my eyes, and tried to be insensible again. I was delirious the remainder of the night, and only roused to recollection by sounds of such terror as insensibility resisted in vain; they were the voices of the murderers which muttered all night around my bed; I heard also the steps and voices
of

of others, whom I feared to look at through the darkness, lest I should see realised the shapes which imagination poured on me when my eyes were closed.

“At intervals I saw lightnings of blasting force and brightness flashing through the casements of the hut, and heard sounds rolling over the roof, which I afterwards heard were the thunders of a volcanic eruption. In the morning, when I at length ventured to inquire and to complain, I was checked by words and looks of prophetic sadness, and the woman to whom I was intrusted often began to speak to me, but suddenly broke off without power to proceed; whether distrusting the levity of childhood, or resisting the violation of confidence, I know not. A few days after I was conveyed to a convent, where I was placed to board, and from which I was removed, as afterwards from others, with much hurry of trepidation and many stratagems
of

of concealment. Parent, relation, or inquiring friend I had none; the life that had begun in calamity proceeded in mystery. At every place where I resided, I was indeed told of a friend by whose directions my life was managed, but whom I was never to see: this friend I was exhorted to conciliate by silent reverence and remote submission. I felt little complacency towards an invisible benefactor, by whom I was supported just above indigence, and hurried about from place to place without any communications of affection or confidence.

At length I was some years ago placed in this convent, where I was told at my entrance I must prepare to take the vows, and seclude myself from the world for ever. Solitude and ignorance had left me little power of choice, and little temptation to resistance. At first, therefore, I heard this with little reluctance; but as I grew up, strange visions floated
before

before me, of that world which I was to resign without having known. Sometimes I delighted to imagine the world a region whose gales breathed felicity, and whose soil poured forth roses spontaneously, whose inhabitants melted in bowers of balm, or sparkled in palaces of amethyst; and sometimes it appeared to me as in the dark dreams of that visioned night, every hand armed with the weapon of blood, and every visage flashing the flames of hell! Yet even over this picture of terrors was shed a light of romantic splendour and wild adventure, which, modified as it was by length of time and weakness of childish perceptions, left on my mind an impression of curiosity, mingled with awe, indeed, but not remote from desire. Whether my meditations on the world were just or not, the result was a determination not to quit it thus ignorant and incurious. I communicated my resolution

to my abbess, who heard me with a burst of indignation, which when I had suffered to pass over, I found her arguments not equally forcible. I resisted her, therefore, respectfully but tenaciously. When she was weary of contending with one she could neither convince nor punish, she wrote to this person whom she represented as the arbiter of my fate, and whose interference she looked on as irresistible. Her appeal was followed by a haughty command to take the veil, without opposition, which would only prove the impotence of my contumacy, and the imbecility of my helplessness. I was now roused to resistance; for whom will not oppression rouse? I demanded by whom I was detained and dictated to? I demanded to be restored to my natural protectors, and affirmed it was impossible there could be a human being so destitute of support and protection as I was represented to be. The answer was
short

short, but decisive: 'Your birth is infamous; your parents are dead; you must take the veil or perish.' Four years have since been wasted in oppression without the right of command, and of resistance without the hope of triumph. I have often resolved to fly, but where can I fly, to whom the world is a wilderness? I have sometimes meditated to submit, but how shall I submit, to whom a convent is worse than a tomb? The sight of you has given a new spring to hope; when I think of you other thoughts mix themselves with the joys of liberation; the world, since you have said 'I love,' is no longer a dream of imaginary felicity; yet the same sounds would, I think, sooth and sustain me were they never to be repeated beyond the echoes of a cloister."

When Ildefonsa had finished her short narrative, Annibal, whose thoughts while she spoke were busied in remote events,

drew from it this conclusion, that she was the concealed and persecuted heir of honours which were usurped by murderers. The rest of the interview passed in a retrospect of the fearful events that had introduced them to each other. Ildefonsa, with many others on the first alarm, had attempted to reach the town by a bridge, which gave way while hundreds were on it, and to the ruins of which she clung without a hope of safety, till rescued by Annibal. They had become insensible when near the margin of the stream, to which they had been wafted by its fluctuations before they recovered. On parting, many plans of liberation were proposed, of which that which Annibal had already adopted appeared the most judicious, to employ the interest of a powerful ecclesiastic in removing Ildefonsa from monastic restraint, the oppression of which he encouraged her to bear with tenderness that lamented

lamented what it advised. They were now separating, when they were startled by a noise; both trembled and looked round; a shadow, so faint that to Ildefonsa it was scarce visible, passed before them. "What did you see?" said Annibal in a voice of fear. "I heard a faint sound," said Ildefonsa answering vaguely. "What did you see?" said Annibal impatiently. "I saw the shadow of a tree," she replied, terrified by his voice. "I saw the form of a fiend," said Annibal gloomily. "What do you say?" said Ildefonsa still more alarmed. "That I am destroyed!" said Annibal, and he rushed from her with unconscious wildness.

Filippo was detained four days at Puzzoli by the indisposition of the prior, to whom he at length presented his letters. The prior, a man of strong passions and extensive power, proud of patronage, and ostentatious of authority, immediately

ately espoused Annibal's cause, wrote to all he could command or importune, sent to Annibal a magnificent present, and invited him to reside with him at Puzzoli: This intelligence was sufficiently inspiring, and the progress he had continued to make in Ildefonsa's affections was such as might animate a less sanguine imagination. Yet when Filippo returned, he found his master plunged in a gloom which nothing could explain or dispel; in vain Filippo watched him with the mute assiduity of humble affection, in vain he exhausted all the flatteries of his eloquence in painting his approaching happiness and distinction, the resistless austerity and munificent affection of the prior, the disappointment of the abbess and her secret employer, and the triumphant liberation of the Signora Ildefonsa, with part of whose story he had been entrusted. Annibal remained silent, or only replied by interjections, which

which proved his mind was far from the subject on which he spoke. He still resorted in the evening to the convent, but for the evening he also appeared to have some other employment. His despondency increased every moment, and Filippo, who at first pretended to be his counsellor, had now little business but to watch his looks silently in the day, and count his groans sleeplessly all night. Ildefonsa perceived the change also, but in the precarious and distressful state of their passion there were so many reasons for melancholy, that, judging of his feelings by her own, she ascribed them to the same cause, and endeavoured to inspire him with hopes she scarcely dared to indulge herself.

It was in one of these melancholy hours, which were half devoted to fear and half to love, that Filippo, who watched at the extremity of the wall, rushed forward with terror in his countenance, and motioned to the lovers
to

to separate. Ildefonsa retired through the garden in haste, and Annibal retreated with Filippo, who hurried along his master with looks and broken interjections of fear, till they had reached a considerable distance from the convent. "Signor," said Filippo, "I have seen him!" Annibal made no answer. "Signor," said Filippo stopping, and turning the light of his lantern full on Annibal, "I *have* seen him!" Annibal moved onwards silently: they reached the inn. Filippo, emboldened by mutual terror, entered the room along with him. "Signor," said he, gazing in his master's face, and not speaking till he was near enough to whisper, "Signor, I have seen him to-night!"—"I see him every night," said Annibal gloomily. Filippo retreated. "Yes, Filippo, every night. He is not dead, poison cannot kill him; he crosses my path when I move, he lurks in my chamber when I sit, he per-

vades

vades all the elements, and whispers audibly in my ears even when their senses are closed.”—“ Signor, what is it you say ? ”—“ I know not what I say ; once I hoped my heart would have burst before I could have uttered thus much, but it is in vain, human resistance is in vain. I know him not, through mist and vision my mind grasps at him in vain ; but I feel that though his character is shadowy, his influence is substantial ; I feel that I am—did I say his victim ? Oh, not yet, not yet ! ”

He fell on his knees, and prayed in agony ; Filippo sunk beside him. “ Oh, Signor ! you break my heart. If the terrible being I have seen be yet alive, the guilt is not yours, nor is it mine. I had hoped, indeed, he had perished ; nor would I have felt so much fear from his spectre, as I did from his living presence this night. Oh, Signor, he is not a being our hands could reach ! we are sinful
men,

men, Signor; let us confess to some holy man, and beg the aids of the church; we are sinful men, and our offences visit us in these shapes of terror—I never recollected them so distinctly as I do this night!”—“Filippo,” said his unhappy master, “I have yielded to the weakness of nature once and the first time, no one has seen me thus subdued before; dismiss your fears, *you* are in no danger; this business requires other agents, leave me to encounter it alone. I believe I am for the dark hour and the unutterable task; I believe I am resigned by my better angel; a blast has spread over life, and the organs with which I behold objects are seared and discoloured. Go from me, I no longer wish to feel any thing human near me; it enfeebles me, and my nerves should be of iron now. I should be mantled in midnight, and armed with serpents—I would I were; I would I were muffled in blindness, or
hissed

hissed into stupor. Filippo, do not heed me ; I struggle no longer from conviction, but from despair. Filippo, do not heed me. The enemy of souls, it is said, has great power over melancholy spirits ; I have been melancholy from my youth, but this is reality, terrible, overwhelming reality ; here is fact and consequence ! Filippo, why do you gaze thus ? Do not heed me."

Filippo, ignorant of the real cause of the convulsions of Annibal's mind, and ascribing them to the dread that the being he had seen was the spectre of the poisoned monk, endeavoured to console him by the hope that he had escaped the effects of the poison, and was yet alive and uninjured. " I know, I know he is alive !" said Annibal distractedly. " There is then nothing to fear or to be reproached with, Signor ; I will get absolution for giving him the drink, and we will go to the holy prior happily."—
 " And

“And who shall give me absolution?” said Annibal. “For what, Signor?” asked Filippo, confounded by the question. “Villain!” said Annibal, starting into frenzy, “do not name it, do not utter it even mentally; would you tempt *me* to speak it? would you feast your ears with my ruin? You are one of his emissaries, bribed to haunt me in his absence, and shut up every breathing hole of remission, every glimpse of quiet.”

Filippo, astonished and dismayed, forbore to speak, and Annibal soon after perceiving him about to quit the room, desired him to sleep at the foot of his bed that night. Filippo obeyed, and Annibal, throwing himself on the bed, closed his eyes. Filippo rose, and bending over him, watched if he slept. His master, starting with the quickness of habitual fear, demanded why he had risen? “Be not displeased, Signor, these are relics of power and sanctity, every one of these crosses has touched

touched the shrine of Loretto; I was going while you slept to lay them under your pillow, so that no evil thing might hurt you." Annibal silently suffered him, and again tried to rest, but Filippo again rose, and began to tie something about the pillars of the bed. "And these, Signor, I have but thought of this moment, they have power against all wizards and unholy things that walk the earth in the shape of men, but are not; this is a shred of the cloth in which the head of St. Januarius was wrapt when it was first discovered: while this is on your bed you are safe from spell and wizardry."—"It is indeed a relic of virtue if I am," said Annibal heavily; "but where did you procure them, Filippo?"—"My uncle Michelo gave them to me on his dying bed, he had purchased them from a Dominican."—"Take them away quick, the haunting of that name will not depart from me all night; let not Michelo touch me,

me, it brings back a thousand images; dark and disastrous thoughts are with me when he is named. Lie down again, Filippo, and speak not till the morning." Filippo obeyed, but twice started up in the night, from an apprehension there were others in the room: so loud were Annibal's exclamations and struggles in his sleep.

To these nights the occupations of the day sometimes afforded relief. The presence of Ildefonsa soothed both his melancholy and his passion; the variety, too, and spirit of adventure which the circumstances of their interview were diversified by, occupied his mind and his imagination. Sometimes the signal of their meeting was the low tones of Ildefonsa's maudoline breathing from among the moon-lit foliage; sometimes that of disappointment was a cluster of withered flowers dropt from the grating of her cell; once he heard her utter
sounds

sounds of a tone different from those of common tenderness, and paused before he approached her to interrupt it. The lines were these :

I.

We meet no more—oh, think on me!
Though lost to sense for ever,
Yet faithful Memory's record dear
Whispers—we shall not sever.

II.

No, by that lip of richest sweets,
Oh, never press'd by me!
No, by that soft eye's humid fires
I must remember thee!

III.

Each passing object's casual light
Shall oft revive its power;
Even you, pale beams, shall wake the thought:
They lit our parting hour.

IV.

And then I'll think I see that form,
In ardent beauty glowing;
And at the thought a tear shall wake,
As fond as now 'tis flowing.

Annibal

Annibal advanced from his concealment; Ildefonsa discovered him, and said in faltering accents, "Those lines were suggested to me when I had seen you once, and expected to see you no more."—"And was it possible," said Annibal, "you could think such a passion could exhaust itself in one night's rapture and conflict?"—"Were it not better that it should than to have lingered through a few nights more only to expire?"—"What do you say, Ildefonsa?"—"That where there is no confidence there can be no passion. Annibal, Annibal, are these like the sweet hours of early love? is this the mixture of soul and feeling you have talked of? Your eye is wild, Annibal, and your cheek is pale; you will not tell me the cause, yet you say you love me."—"If you love me," said Annibal vehemently, "mention this no more. Can the communication of misery and guilt endear
affection

affection or increase happiness?"—"Of guilt, Annibal!"—"Yes; is there not mental guilt? may not a man be a murderer, a parricide in *thought*? do you think that the hardened wretch whose hands reek every night with blood, unrepented and unremembered, suffers like *him* over whose soul the image of anticipated guilt sits for ever, the absence of commission more than balanced by the horrors of feeling and remorse? Oh, Ildefonsa! the anguish of a mind unwillingly depraved, to which evil is aggravated by the bitterness of compulsion and the revoltings of innate integrity, such a state was to be *imagined* in the list of human sufferings till it was inflicted on me."—"What do you mean? Blessed Mother! what do you mean by those words?"—"Nothing, I know not myself; let us talk of your liberation. How did we wander to this subject?"—"It was my fault, and I should have forbore it,
for

for I perceive it always laps you in waywardness and musing ; it was my fault ; but my mind was strangely touched to-night. I again saw that ominous stranger, whom when I see I believe in my fear every thing I have heard of one that watches over my life for evil.”—“ Who ? what stranger is this ? why did you not tell me of him before ? what manner of man is he ? ”—“ You startle me, Annibal, by your vehemence. He is a monk ; I have observed him some days past in consultation with the abbess ; I know not of what convent he is, or what brings him to ours, but I feel a wild awe as he passes and looks on me.”—“ His name, have you heard his name ? ”—“ I think I heard the abbess call him Father Schemoli ; but I will watch him more closely, and learn—” “ No, no, no, approach him not, touch him not, it is unlawful to hold converse with him. Ildefonsa, my innocent love, beware of intercourse
with

with that being ; it is not good to hold it ; once I joined my hand to his, and his grasp has never been relaxed since."

Ildefonsa now terrified to tears, terrified Annibal by her distress. He attempted to sooth her, but every effort to diversify their melancholy conference was rendered ineffectual by involuntary recurrence or gloomy abstraction. "There is a spell over *me* too," said Annibal, with a painful smile, "*my* mind has also been strangely touched. I ascribe it," said he, forcing himself to proceed, "to a prediction I recollect relating to myself, which sheds a gloom over me I cannot dispel."—"What is the purport of it?" said Ildefonsa. "That I am to be flattered with a prospect of the completion of my wishes, never to be verified ; that the object I love is to be torn from me at the moment of possession ; and that life is to change its complexion at the period when its
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aspect becomes brilliant with joy and hope.”—“The prediction is so general, it must have been uttered in infancy,” said Ildefonsa. “Possibly long before it,” said Annibal, heavily. “Has it been so long in circulation?” replied Ildefonsa, endeavouring to evade the application. “I only heard it last night,” said Annibal with emphasis. “It is a melancholy one,” said Ildefonsa, yielding to the complexion of the hour and the conference. “There is an alternative,” said Annibal. “I would embrace any alternative preferably,” said Ildefonsa, heedlessly. “Would you,—would you indeed?” said Annibal, with sudden eagerness. “I would, assuredly,” she replied, “unless—” “Unless what?” “Unless it involved a crime—or—” “Aye, aye, I know all you would say,” said Annibal. “Would the degree of the crime make any difference?” said he, after a pause, then again interrupted her
her

her with "But that is of no consequence to me." From a conference thus wildly broken, neither could derive much pleasure; they separated, uncheered by a promise of speedy return, for Ildefonsa informed her lover, that attendance on a peculiar ceremony would detain her for three following nights.

This interval Filippo observed his master to pass in unmitigated wretchedness, and overheard him in solitude and in sleep, perpetually repeating to himself the ominous sentence which he had communicated to Ildefonsa. On the morning of the fourth day, letters arrived from Puzzoli of the most momentous import. They contained an order from the Bishop of the diocese for the removal of sister Ildefonsa Mauzoli, of the Ursuline convent, to another in Puzzoli. This the prior informed Annibal in another letter, was only a preparatory step to her being declared free to adopt or

reject a monastic life. The letter concluded by pressing Annibal's removal to Puzzoli, where the event of his love and fortune seemed to demand his presence. The order was brought to the convent by a messenger of the prior's, who was also an ecclesiastical officer, and presented by him to the abbess; Filippo accompanied him by the order of Annibal. The delivery of the order was attended with some formality, and witnessed by a number of attendants.

Hour after hour, Annibal counted the delay of the messenger with impatience, which was at length discoloured by fear. Unable to communicate the cause of his agitation, and agitated by other causes, he wandered on the margin of the river, now dark and wild with winter, and tried in vain to expel from his thought the dolorous sounds, which his lips were incessantly forming, while he struggled to forget them. Late in the evening

Filippo

Filippo returned breathless, with strange intelligence, which at first he could only vent in exclamation ; compassion for his master's solicitude, at length made him coherent, and he related the events of the day, but his peculiar manner, and numerous interruptions may be spared in the narration.

He had pressed with many other attendants, into the apartment where the messenger of the prior was introduced to the abbess. She received the paper with submission, but on receiving it, crossed herself with marks of grief and dismay, and then addressing herself to the messenger, said, "This order comes too late, except to renew our grief for the loss of a departed sister ; Ildefonsa Mauzoli is now beyond the reach of earthly power, she expired yesterday."

The messenger, with strong expressions of concern, and some of distrust, quitted the apartment, where the clamorous

morous distress of the nuns, which seemed to wait a signal for its renewal, contended in vain with the loud murmurs in which the attendants testified their suspicion and resentment. But Filippo, whose first impulse of concern was superseded by his penetration, determined not to quit the convent thus incuriously. He dreaded his master's despair; he mistrusted the malignity of the Abbess; and while the attendants were dispersing, he glided through the passages of the convent, and repaired to the chapel, where he dispensed his prostrations with such unction, and examined the relics with so profound a visage, that he attracted the notice of an old, deaf, crippled nun, who usually loitered in the chapel to tax the faith or charity of devout visitors. By this sybil he was led about from one saint's nail to another's eye-brow; he was shewn the dust that dropt from the crayons of St. Luke,

and

and a tile which fell from the Holy House of Loretto, in its aerial journey from Palestine to Italy. In the course of his enquiries he satisfied himself that *she* was almost completely deaf, and nearly blind; he now therefore reconnoitred the chapel with some degree of confidence. Through one of the upper arcades, he observed the nuns passing with such frequency, that he immediately conjectured it opened to the gallery where their cells were ranged. To confirm his conjectures, by the gratuity of a few zechins, he prevailed on the nun to repeat a certain number of prayers for him, at a shrine which owed the distinction more to the distance from the place of his devotion, than to his belief of its uncommon sanctity. When he had made this arrangement, (in the prosecution of which he very soon had the satisfaction of seeing the aged nun fast asleep) he cautiously approached

proached the part of the chapel under the arcade; he knew not in what manner to convey his presence or his purposes. A small portable stringed instrument, which he had purchased on the way from one of the attendants, in hopes of soothing his master's gloomy solitude, presented itself as a lucky medium of unsuspected communication. He touched it, but the old nun, awoken by so unusual a sound, tottered forward to demand the reason of it, at the same time assuring Filippo that he had been so unfortunate as to disturb a vision in which St. Ursula was just about to promise her any favour she could ask for the young visitor, on condition he applied for the situation of gardener to the convent, "For our gardener," said the nun, "*has grown so old—*" "Venerable mother," said Filippo, "return to the shrine, doubtless you will be favoured with a continuance of the vision. I myself

myself received an uncommon accession just at the moment, which, with the help of your prayers, may improve into an actual call to become gardener to St. Ursula. With regard to this instrument, venerable mother, I was once, when wandering over the *Andes* (which are a ridge of high mountains dividing Germany from the Island of Africa,) chased by a band of bloody, unbelieving Moors, I had no instrument of defence but *this*, on which I was inspired to play a hymn to St. Ursula, the effect of which was so sacred, that the whole troop was converted, and remain good Catholics to this day. I made a vow on the spot, that on this very instrument I would play the same hymn at the shrine of St. Ursula, as soon as I arrived in Italy; I beg, therefore, reverend mother, you will do me no disquiet in the performance of my vow." "Heaven forbid!" replied the religious, "I never heard a

more glorious recital, it is exactly like the legends which the confessor reads to us on the vigils of the saints."

She then returned to the shrine, where she was soon wrapt into another vision on the call of the young gardener. But however the deaf nun might be dismissed without much cost of dexterity, he knew not how to lull the vigilant sisters. It was a lucky hour, *that* allotted to private devotion, which most of them were resigning to sleep. He recollected an air he had heard Annibal sing in suppressed tones near the garden, while he waited for Ildefonsa ; it was plaintive, and might well pass for a pilgrim's song. He touched a slight prelude on his instrument, and then sung the following words, *mezza voce* :—

If she who weeps a lover's woes,
Yet linger near these conscious walls,
Of absent love the song she knows,
She hears its fond, though timid calls.

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He paused—all was still. He repeated it in a voice tremulous with disappointment, and a light vibration, (low and brief as a sigh.) of Ildefonsa's well-known maudoline, came to his ear, filling him with confidence and joy. His recognition of this signal was without doubt or fear, for he had heard his master say, that Ildefonsa was the only inmate within the walls that touched the maudoline. He rose joyfully, and was quitting the chapel without disturbing the old nun, to learn the success of her second conference with St. Ursula, when a sound near him arrested his steps. He knew not to what direction to refer it; it seemed that of a human voice, yet it issued from under his feet! He listened—"There was no sound," said a voice from beneath the shrine, "it was fancy; the chapel is empty."—"Then let us ascend," said a female voice, "for I am suffocated with these damps. Is
your

your apprehension of discovery sufficiently removed ?” — “ Perfectly ;” answered the first, which Filippo discovered to be that of Father Schemoli.

“ Discovery *cannot* penetrate where you have led me. To-morrow night, then, reverend mother, this serpent shall be crushed in the dark ! May I rely on your assistant ?” — “ As firmly as on your own resolution, father.” — “ *That* has never failed :” said Schemoli, emphatically.

The time which they took to ascend, and enter the chapel by a concealed grating, in the pavement of the shrine, gave Filippo an opportunity to screen himself behind the profuse volumes of drapery that enfolded it ; but when he saw the confessor and abbess of the convent, for that was the female, ascend from the shrine, and pass the spot where he stood, he ceased to hope for life. They passed him, however, and drawing near the door, observed the

nun ;

nun ; the abbess awoke her ; “ Why are you sleeping ? ” said the abbess. “ I was not sleeping,” replied the nun. “ Strangers might have entered the chapel,” said the confessor. “ That is impossible, while I am here,” observed the nun. “ Are you sure no one has been here *since*,” asked the abbess. “ There was one young pilgrim,” said the nun, exalting her voice, “ who went through the pannelled door, behind the drapery at the left pediment of the shrine of St. Ursula.” Filippo took the hint as dexterously as it was given, and gliding through the door which he had not till then observed, retreated silently through a remote passage. “ You were very particular in observing the manner of his exit,” said Schemoli. “ To tell you the truth, I let him out myself,” answered the nun. “ She is foolish,” said the abbess, retiring with Schemoli, “ but strict and faithful.”

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In the mean time Filippo hastened to his master; he informed him of the supposed machinations of the abbess; he did not conceal from him the presence and agency of Schemoli, he averred it his belief that the Signora Ildefonsa did exist, though he feared it was determined she should not exist much longer. All personal interference was now fruitless, as he would probably be excluded from the walls of the convent, but as the following night was assigned for the celebration of her funeral, at which strangers would of course be present, he advised Annibal to repair thither with the officer who had brought the Bishop's order, to state the circumstances which had occurred, and of which he (Filippo) would avow himself a witness, cover the abbess with confusion, and interest the spectators and the ecclesiastics in the restitution of Ildefonsa. Every thing indeed, that courage or ingenuity could propose, was

anticipated in the advice of Filippo, which Annibal prepared to adopt, with a heart he was delighted to feel beating with human passions once more.

The funeral of a sister of the Ursuline convent was always attended with peculiar solemnity, from the abbess's wish to impress strangers who were permitted to attend it, with an opinion of the sanctity of her retreat, as well as to spread over the minds of the inmates a deeper shade of religious awe and submission. The office was to be performed in the chapel at midnight: two hours before which every avenue was filled by strangers, among whom Annibal and his attendants found no difficulty in mingling. His spirits were solemnly touched; the idea of Ildefonsa associated with the persuasion and imagery of death, (though from death he believed her sufficiently distant,) the gliding steps, the dim light, and the low

low requiem, repelled the tumult of expectation, and stilled and saddened him. While the crowd were examining the devices with which the passages of the chapel were arrayed, Annibal, from an upper arcade, beheld a group of nuns assembled round the bier, which stood in the centre of the chapel. The tapers were not yet lit, but a torch burned dimly at the foot of the bier, shewing the pale, evanid forms of the sisters, who from time to time breathed the low, lulling tones which compose the office for the dead, and which were soon to mingle with the chantings of the choir and the rich thunders of the organ. Annibal, visionary by nature, and melancholy from habit, listened, entranced in sadness, and almost wished himself lapped in the deep rest which was soothed by the breathings of such holy harmony. Of Ildefonsa, even if he possessed her, he dreaded his possession would not
be

be long, and though armed for her liberation, he already wept her as dead.

Meanwhile midnight approached, an ecclesiastic of rank attended to perform the service. The abbess and the nuns were ranged in their galleried stalls, the crowd below, pale with religious awe, filled the aisle and chancel. The service of the dead was chanted; the roar of the organ ceased, the prior, rising, advanced to the bier, and spreading his arms, breathed a benediction over the pall that covered it. The attendants raising it, bore it towards the narrow door of a subterranean cemetery, preceded by the sacristan, whose torch flared over the dark and arched entrance. On a signal, the nuns were about to renew the requiem, whose last echo was now dying on the ear, when Annibal, who had wrought himself to an energetic burst of rage and enthusiasm, called aloud to them to forbear, and appealing alternately

nately to the prior and the spectators, demanded justice on the abbess, for deceiving them by a fictitious interment of a nun, whom, if alive, she had immured in the recesses of a dungeon. This bold outcry was followed by terror and confusion. The attendants paused in dismay; the nuns ran shrieking to their cells, the prior advanced in amaze, and the crowd, variously divided, awaited the event of this extraordinary appeal.

Annibal now briefly, but vividly, related the late events, which were corroborated by Filippo. He urged the prior by his awe of episcopal authority, and he interested the spectators by a detail of the helplessness, the persecutions, and the beauty of Ildefonsa. By this time the abbess had descended, and appealed loudly in her turn, against the insult offered to her character and her sanctuary, by a wandering fugitive, of whom nothing more was known than, than that
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he was an enemy to the Catholic Faith, a seducer of vestal purity, and a calumniator of vestal sanctity. Annibal, who perceived the auditory fluctuating, hastened to bring the contest to a speedy and obvious test, and throwing himself at the feet of the prior, besought him to command the pall to be removed, and the bier to be examined. “If,” added he, “Ildefonsa be living, she is not on that bier, if she be dead, the appearance of the corse will justify my charge, and blast her murderers with conviction.”

To this proposal the prior, moved by strong personal curiosity, consented, nor did the abbess seem to decline it. They moved with difficulty through the chancel, now obstructed by the crowd, tumultuous with curiosity. The attendants invested the bier, the prior himself held a taper as he bowed over it, the pall was removed; with a spring of agony Anni-
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bal threw himself on the object it disclosed, on the *corse* of *Ildefonsa*.

He started up, revived by frantic hope, he examined the hand on which his burning tears were dropping ; it was no waxen effigy, it was cold and relaxed, but it was human flesh. He looked with straining eyes on the face, there was no sign of violence ; he knew them well, there was neither streak nor stain, neither discolouration nor contraction, she was calm and lovely, as in sleep. He was stirred from his trance, by a sound which he heard, without comprehending it, it was the loud rage of the abbess and the spectators, who, on this visible proof of the falsity of his charge, would willingly have torn Annibal to pieces, without patience for his explanations, or a sympathy for his misery. But his mind, embittered by persecution, and goaded by a conviction of crime or imposture in the present event, furnished him with
such

such sudden eloquence of vindication, such a flow of passion, (which described himself as bereft, by monkish fraud and cruelty, of the only hope that soothed his existence, and heaped together such fearful stories of monastic oppression and religious murder) that the lower orders of the auditory, always favourable to the depression of dignity, again adopted his cause, and demanded loudly an inquisition into the affair. The abbess, enraged, addressed the crowd, and warned them how they upheld a wizard, a sorcerer, one that was leagued with unholy spirits against the cause of the church and its votarists; she told them, the stranger was a *Montorio*, one of the dark race, whose deeds of horror extended beyond the limits of earth, and the catalogue of human crimes.

From this accusation, Annibal, unused to the persecutions of Ippolito, was defending himself with the vehemence of
genuine

genuine horror, and looking round the multitude, demanded who dare approve the charges on himself or his house, when his eye, as it swept the circle with a look of command, rested on the dark face of Schemoli, standing directly opposite him, and regarding him with a look of fixed sternness. Annibal was transfixed to the spot; his eye became hollow, and his lip quivered. He bent forward with a broken sound of fear, and retreated without a power of collecting thought, or uttering a word. The abbess screamed with triumph. “ See,” said she, “ the wretch, arrested in the very moment of his false defence, by the power of conscience ! See, does he utter a word ? Look on his haggard face—his eye is bent on air—but doubtless he sees forms from which the eyes of the faithful are veiled.”

Annibal springing through the crowd with a vehement impulse, called him by
name

name to stay, then retreating, with his eyes still fixed in the direction where he had glided away, said inwardly, "See where he flits along; he is no creature of this earth!"—"Whom do you speak to?" said some around him, in fear, or in curiosity. "Ask me not," said An-nibal wildly, "I dare not tell; his form is human, but be not deceived, he is not one of us." The few who pressed around him, were driven back by these wild words, and the zealous and terrified crowd now as loudly pressing for his arrest and detention, as they had a moment past to hear and to favour him. The prior advanced, and informed him his conduct and expressions had been so extraordinary, that he conceived it his duty as a churchman, to take cognisance of them. He then commanded his attendants to secure and guard him. On the unhappy prisoner, neither his address, nor the consequent movements

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appeared to make any impression; he was in the calmness of fixed madness. From time to time he uttered the words, "See where he glides away," to the great terror of his guard, whom he however made no attempt to resist.

Terror, disastrous passion, and disappointed revenge, had indeed impaired his reason, but his madness was without violence, for his strength was exhausted. The remaining rites of sepulture were hastily concluded; the crowd, still murmuring with wonder and doubt, dispersed, and the prior recollecting, that in the ruined town, there was now no place to secure the prisoner, consulted with the abbess, who agreed that he should remain secured in some outer apartment of the convent, and watched by the attendants. There was little need of security; Annibal remained calm and passive, but from time to time, uttered words, which, had his hearers been acquainted

quainted with the late events of his life, would have suggested ideas more terrible than the outrage of a convent; but terrified by the ramblings of delirium, which some interpreted as possession, and some as prophecy, his guards, one by one retired, each alledging the departure of the last as a reason for his own, and each dreading as he saw a companion retire, that *he* would be left alone with the maniac. It was solitude, silence, and chillness that recalled Annibal to his reason. He was in a deserted room that had once been the sacristy; the pale, faint light of the moon almost setting, fell through mist and haze, on a narrow window. Annibal for a moment recollected the events of the night, and then, in the confusion of returning sense, endeavoured to exclude them by shutting his eyes; for the late privation of reason had been accompanied with imperfect vision, and

he wished to retire for shelter to insensibility again. It was impossible; every thing recurred with a force more vivid than reality, and again he started up to prevent the attendants from carrying the bier of Ildefonsa to the vault. He found himself in a lone and narrow apartment, the door of which was secured, but from without he thought he heard whispers as of men in consultation. He now implored release or information respecting the fate of Ildefonsa, by every topic that he thought could operate on compassion or fear, and in every tone of passion, from the whisperings of supplication, to the hoarse, broken, inarticulate roar of rage and menace.

He procured neither freedom nor answer, and at length feeling his brain again unsettle, and dreading the loss of reason as the extinction of his sole means of hope, he retreated to a seat,
and

and hiding his head in the folds of his mantle, and pressing his temples firmly with his hands, he tried to exclude the forms that were every moment enlarging in size, and quickening in motion before him, and to breathe a broken prayer for the preservation of his reason. He grew calmer, but when he ventured to look up, he again mistrusted the faithfulness of his senses. Every object around him seemed in motion; and the blue and shadowy light quivered so fitfully and wild, that a kind of fantastic animation seemed to pervade the very walls and cieling. Again he closed his eyes, but the motion was palpable, for though he could no longer see any object, he felt the seat shaking under him. Before he could rise, he heard the bells of the convent pealing out with that confused and dolorous sound, that the wretched inmates of countries visited by earthquakes understand but too well.

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well. The thought of perishing without a struggle was horrible. Again he rushed to the door, and implored to be at least allowed a chance for life, which in that hour of horrors is not even denied to the most abandoned convict in his dungeon. He implored in vain, his cries, even to his *own* ears, were drowned in the increasing tumult and distraction of the convent. He heard, indeed, many voices, but none that answered him; he heard steps passing close to his door, and some even that faltered as they passed, but they faltered from the terror of their own flight, and though they echoed his cries with involuntary impulse, they yet seemed not to hear them. At length a crash was heard, which seemed like the toppling of the whole structure, and the next moment a mass of ruinous building falling against the door of Annibal's prison it was shattered to atoms; and through the chasm he beheld

beheld the walls of the convent shaking, figures, in the infatuation of fear, clinging to the rent and heaving fragments, and a copper-tinged and flaky sky, peering through the crushed roof, whose crags and ridges, tinted with the glare, seamed the mass with portentous shapes, that seemed to the fugitives below, like dragons perched on their spires, or hippogriffs breathing sulphur through their shrines. Annibal started from his prison, and the next moment saw its walls rolling together like a scroll, and its place lost in a cloud of dust, and sparks, and sulphurous smoke. Half blind, half stifled, he struggled on, and perceived that the fall of the principal tower, which had shaken the walls of his prison to dust, had also forced its way through the pavement of the cloistered passage on which it descended, and which now only presented a number of chasms, whose darkness or depth the eye could not measure,

and whose crumbling edges were but just visible in the light of the funeral lamps which had burned in the cloister that night, some of them yet unextinguished in the fall gleamed to some depth in the chasms, shewing their rude, dark prominences, and playing ineffectually on the thick darkness in which their depths were lost. He noted all this with perceptions quickened by fear, but the impulse to advance was irresistible to one so lately in durance. He advanced, therefore; he was on the edge of a cavity; on the opposite side was a door, through which a steady light appeared, as if that part of the building was not yet in ruins. He attempted to spring across it, but either his senses were false or his strength impaired, for he plunged into darkness and emptiness, and his breath and recollection failed him in a moment. He recovered, but after what interval he had no means of knowing; he felt himself
sore

sore and stunned, but not incapable of motion. He rose and attempted to discover into what place he had descended. The floor was damp and stony ; it was evidently the floor of a vault, but the utmost extent of his arms could not discover the walls, nor encounter any intervening object. He groped on in cautious and breathless fear, till the dread that he was only treading the same dark circle, the dread that he was plunged into an abyss, over which was heaped a mountain of ruin no hand could ever remove ; the dread that he must wander in darkness, uttering cries that must never be heard, and imploring aid that never could reach him, till he must suck the dank and flinty ground in the madness of thirst, or gnaw his withering flesh for food ;—the dread of this rose like a burning tide of agony in his throat ; and sending forth a cry that might make itself be heard, even amid the uproar of
that

that night, he sunk on the ground. He sprung up again, for his cry was plainly repeated by other sounds than the echoes of the vault; again it was repeated, and Annibal, to whom even the imaginary tenant of darkness would scarce have been an unwelcome visitant, called aloud and repeatedly, and springing on one foot, listened with every faculty on the stretch. Again he heard a voice so distinct, so well known, so unhopcd for, that, bewildered and laughing with convulsive joy, he said to himself, "It is impossible, it is illusion, it is a sleight of the enemy! Oh! when will the cool, clear light of the morn come, and all this vanish?" He was answered in tones he could no longer misunderstand; "It is, it is I; stir not, move not a step, I must approach in darkness; but stir not limb, or joint, or thought, till you feel my hand in yours." Again believing his senses failing, he closed his eyes: it was
fortunate

fortunate he did so. The next moment he felt the soft hand of Ildefonsa lightly touching his. With a sensation inexpressibly delicious, he suffered himself to be led a few steps by her in darkness. He dared not yet trust himself with sight; he felt as if there was a treasure near him, which to discover too soon was to destroy; he dreaded that to open his eyes would be to banish the delicious dream of her voice. At length a strong light fell on them; he looked around; Ildefonsa was beside him, and a torch burned at the foot of a cluster of pillars, against which she leant apparently exhausted with emotion.

For a long time their questions were asked and answered by looks, by lips that moved but could not articulate, by eyes from which they smote away the tears that obscured the sight of each other for a moment. "Oh, Annibal!" said Ildefonsa, speaking first though feebly, "my

preserver, I have preserved you in turn ! When I discovered you, you were suspended on one foot over a vault, of which the depth is—Oh, Santa Madre ! it opens beneath my feet when I think of it ; another step and you had been dashed into atoms, into ten thousand atoms ! Had I called you would have moved, had I approached you would have moved, had I displayed the torch, in the giddiness of sudden sight you would have moved, and a motion was death. I concealed the light ; I called to you not to move ; I crept over to you, dreading the sound of my own foot ; I saved you, and now save me, for I can stand no longer.”

She tottered, and the wound (which Ippolito had bathed in the stream and bound up) bled afresh from the violence of her emotions. Annibal, grasping her in his arms, looked round with anguish and distraction. In a vault of vast extent, dimly lit by the lamps of a distant

distant shrine, and strewed with the relics and emblems of the dead, he looked around in vain for relief or for hope. Ildefonsa's eyes wandered, and her lips were pale, but she was yet capable of conveying her meaning by gestures, and now pointing vehemently to the left, Annibal bore her thither, still carrying the torch, and still looking around without a glimpse of deliverance.

The direction to which she pointed appeared only more dark and rugged than that they quitted; but as he advanced (the torch burning dimly from the damp of the vault) a faint blue light seemed to hover in the distance. He stopped and gazed; Ildefonsa murmured an audible sound of encouragement. The light became more distinct, it issued through an aperture in the roof of the vault, which here was so low, that Annibal was compelled to bend as he approached it. A fragment of something resembling a piece of drapery floated

floated through it, and a voice which at first breathed a few faint timid calls from above, now bursting out in a torrent of lauds, blessings, encouragements, and entreaties, accompanied by a figure eagerly bending from the cavity, discovered Filippo. It was no time for inquiries, though the situation suggested a thousand. Filippo, with equal strength and dexterity, fastening his mantle, which he tore into stripes, to the edge of the cavity, drew up Ildefonsa with Annibal's assistance, who was himself aided by its projections to ascend after her, and beheld, with mind and senses revived, the morning sun dawning on the placid course of the river, which had the preceding evening reflected the turrets and groves of the convent, but whose waters now glided by dismantled walls, and were fringed with inverted trees, patches of verdure dotting naked rocks, and beds of sand and slime poured into the bosom
of

of gardens. In the sudden joy of liberation, they almost forgot the circumstances of danger and distress by which they were still surrounded, till recalled by the necessity of immediate shelter for Ildefonsa. A perplexed consultation was held. It was dangerous to remain near the convent, though in ruins; it was dangerous to return to the town. Of any local resource nearer than Puzzoli, Annibal and his servant were ignorant, and there it was impossible, in Ildefonsa's exhausted state, to proceed. They were relieved by Ildefonsa herself, who recollected a retreat where neither pursuit nor accident was likely to betray them. Thither she was borne by Annibal, who felt, while watching her dim eye, and listening to her painful and broken respiration, an agony of domestic intimate distress, such as had never accompanied the high and strange events in which he had been lately conversant.

It

It was a hut rudely built of sods, cemented by the intertwisted roots and foliage of the verdure with which they were covered, and roofed with wicker, over which the trees that surrounded it had shed a profuse covering of leaves. They were not surprised to see it yet standing, for they knew that slight structures often survive those shocks which overturn palaces. “ ‘This,’” said Ildefonsa as they supported her into it, and strewed their vests over the bed of moss on which they placed her, “ ‘this was the habitation of a recluse. His habits were solitary and gloomy ; the peasants believed him a being conscious of some great crime, or engaged in some dark pursuit. They dreaded to approach his hut while living ; he has been dead some days, and their reluctance to visit it is probably greater. Here we are safe, for superstition secures us from every intruder.’”

Annibal groaned incredulously. The
care

care of every further arrangement was left to Filippo, who planned with his usual address, and executed with his usual caution and spirit. He resolved, as soon as the confusion of the disaster had somewhat abated, to return to the town, and there, with the clamorous grief of a domestic, to bewail his master, whom he was to represent as having perished in the ruins of the convent; at the same time he was to learn the reports circulated concerning the causes of *his* and the Signora Ildefonsa's disappearance. He was to remove from the house where they had lived every article that might either lead to a discovery of his master's name, or minister to their comfort in their woodland abode; and whatever was yet necessary during their sojourn there, he was to procure from another village, which he purposed to visit in disguise. Annibal, satisfied of his talents and fidelity, suffered him to arrange his plans without interruption, while

while he hung over his pallid love, and saw with more anguish her forced and patient smiles, than the expression of pain and weakness with which they contended ineffectually.

Filippo in about an hour set out, and Annibal was left alone with Ildefonsa. During this interval he experienced new and peculiar feelings ; he felt he had opened a new page in the history of human misery. His rank had been exalted, and his youth was passed in the downy repose of luxury ; his wishes were anticipated by the diligence of a hundred domestics, and of *wants* he had formed conceptions as clear as the inhabitant of the torrid zone may have of the cold, and darkness, and wintry horrors of Greenland. His distresses were wholly intellectual and imaginary ; he had yet to learn that there were such evils as cold, and want, and destitution, and on this day he learnt it with bitter force.

To

To spread over Ildefonsa's couch every garment he could spare ; to close every cranny of the hut with the driest leaves and moss he could find ; to vary her scanty furniture a thousand times, and still find something to be rectified in every change ; to solicit her lost appetite with the late and tasteless forest fruits—all this he *could* do. But to read in her dim eye wants he could not satisfy ; to know that assistance was so near, yet not dare to implore it ; that there were ten thousand alleviations of pain and weakness for which she languished, and which the wishes of solitary affection could never bring ; that he had often scoffed at and wasted as superfluous what now he would welcome as a treasure—this he could *not* do ; it was insupportable : he almost reviled the elements as voluntary ministers of mischief, and was only restrained from violence of complaint by

by the fear of alarming the sufferer for whom he trembled.

Filippo returned tottering under a burden of every thing that inventive solicitude could provide. A plenteous meal was prepared, and a fire kindled, which they recollected, if seen, might confirm the superstition of the peasantry, and throw a stronger spell of fearful security around their wild abode. The intelligence of Filippo corresponded with their conjectures. Annibal was supposed to have perished in the fall of the tower which had freed him ; no suspicion of his escape existed. Of Ildefonsa he had heard nothing, but the same opinion respecting her prevailed in the convent ; for the monk who was employed to assassinate her, dreading the rage of Schemoli and the abbess, averred that she had perished by the blow he gave her as he fled ; and as the convulsions of the earth had ravaged

vaged even the subterranean apartments of the convent, breaking up vaults and overthrowing shrines, the disappearance of her corse excited neither surprise nor suspicion. Seated now amid comparative abundance, while Annibal saw or hoped he saw the wan cheek of Ildefonsa grow warm in the ruddy light, and Filippo, with characteristic vivacity, laughed, shouted, and bounded round his master and the Signora (for no influence could prevail on him to sit or partake the meal with them); each of them recounted the extraordinary circumstances under which they had again met, after being separated by the rudest shocks of both natural and moral violence.

The escape of Annibal has been already related; that of Ildefonsa (who after being preserved from assassination by Ippolito, was afterwards separated from him by the shock of an earthquake) was owing to the numerous subterranean passages

sages of the convent, which extended to the brink of the river, and into one of which she had been precipitated by the vaulted roof opening beneath her feet, and enclosing her with such expedition, that Ippolito saw her no more. She had descended with little hurt, and soon discovered where she was by the lamps which glimmered before a subterranean shrine of St. Ursula. At this she was prostrating herself for protection, when another chasm yawned over her head, and she beheld through it, when her terrors permitted her to see, Filippo, who extended his arms, and called on her in tones of encouragement. She was about to avail herself of his plan for extricating her, when the voice of Annibal, whom the windings of the passage excluded from the light, reached her ear, and lighting the extinguished torch which her assassin had dropped, she pursued the sound, and discovered him suspended,

as

as she related, over a cavity, into which a step had been destruction. On concluding their narratives, both turned to Filippo, whose account was brief and simple. On learning the imprisonment of his master, he had in vain supplicated to be permitted to share it with him. He had been driven from the convent with violence; “but no one,” as he said, “could drive him from sitting down beneath its walls.” Here, though he knew his presence was no protection, he yet dreaded there was danger in his absence, and continued therefore to linger and to lament, till he was astonished by the sight of two figures, one of whom he knew to be Ildefonsa, descending from the gardens of the convent, and gliding along the brink of the river. His mind was at first clouded by fantastic fear, but when he could no longer doubt that the figure he saw was “the real and living Signora,” he prepared to follow her,

her, assured of safety from the protection that was extended to *her*. Just at this moment a commotion of the earth separated the figures he was observing; the lady sunk into the ground, and the cavalier was wafted down the stream with a rapidity that mocked the sight. The lady, however, was Filippo's principal object. He observed that the shocks were slight and partial, though the convent, situated on an eminence, almost excavated by subterranean recesses, and mined by the lapse of a river, was shaken to ruins by it. When personal danger therefore had ceased, he examined that part of the bank where Ildefonsa had disappeared. The hollow sound of his steps convinced him there was a cavity beneath; the apertures made by the earthquake were but slightly and irregularly closed with masses of earth and stone. He removed with his hands those which obstructed the spot near which he beheld her sink,

and by the lights which twinkled in the cemetery far beneath, he discovered Ildefonsa prostrate at the shrine of St. Ursula. From thence her liberation was easy.

The evening was passed in congratulations on their marvellous escape, in anticipations of future security and happiness, and by Annibal in regret that his brother had been so near, unseen by him, and had probably perished in the disastrous commotion of the night. This regret was increased by a disappointed wish of meeting and conferring with Ippolito, between the cause and object of whose persecution and his own he began to trace a resemblance, pregnant with singular suspicions. Filippo promised, if possible, to procure some intelligence of him in his next excursion ; and Annibal then retiring to the porch of the hut, left Ildefonsa, with *unprompted delicacy*, to the sole possession of her humble apartment.

As Ildefonsa's wound was slight, and her
weakness

weakness local, she recovered rapidly ; and the assiduous tenderness of Annibal was aided by the vivacious intelligence of Filippo, who related with strong humour the conjectures of the superstitious villagers about Annibal and Ildefonsa, of whose disastrous passion they imagined that the figures seen dimly on the brink of the river were a visionary representation ; and *they* had more than the praise of common courage who would venture at night near the spot where the shade of the ill-fated votaress was supposed to seek the sanctuary of consecrated rest, and that of her tempter to be wafted down the current in a bark into which he was inviting her, and whose progress tracked the waters with furrows of flame.

Of Ippolito, Filippo failed to procure any intelligence, as he had been apprehended immediately on his arrival at Puzzoli by the order of the Inquisition, and the secrecy which marks the proceedings

ceedings of that tribunal rarely permits a vestige of its victims to be traced beyond the precincts of its walls. That the brothers were so near without meeting was not surprising; Bellano, and the village where Annibal resided, though near the convent, were in opposite directions, and Ippolito had delayed at the former only one night.

Ildefonsa's health was now so far restored, that her care was transferred to Annibal, whose attendance on her she feared had impaired his strength and spirits, and she urged him repeatedly to excursions in the forest, whose "wild and woodland scenery would breathe freshness on his mind and frame." He declined her importunities, or, when he complied it was for a short time and with reluctance. "Why will you not," said she earnestly, "go out and wander in the forest for an hour?"—"Why will you press me thus?" said Annibal, who

appeared to have reasons for his reluctance he could not avow. “Because it is now the hour, and—” “The hour! who told you *this was the hour?*” said Annibal wildly.—“Do I not know that night is the time for *you*.”—“Why, what is the meaning of this? why do you thus *dwell on night?*”—“Because it is unsafe to walk by day, and expose us to discovery.”—“True, true; was that all?” said he vaguely. “That was all, in truth.”—“Perhaps,” said he after a gloomy pause, “there is still less safety by night than day.”—“I do not understand you.”—“So much the better,” said he impatiently. “But why,” said Ildefonsa with fond tenacity, “why will you not wander for an hour along the path you described so vividly to me the other evening, where the trunks of trees and lingering foliage are tinged with colours richer than summer, and the pale gleams of sky between the branches, intersected

tersected with spray and fibre, resembled, you said, the narrow shafted lights of a cloistered passage: you described it so forcibly, I thought I saw you there?"—" *Saw me there!*" said Annibal starting, "Heaven forefend! No, no, impossible; you did *not* see me there."—"I would I were able," said Ildefonsa, reverting to her indisposition. "I tell you, you *would not be able*," said Annibal emphatically. "And will you not wander this evening?"—"No; I dread that I should *lose* myself if I did."—"I think I could discover you if you did."—"Discover me?"—"Yes, discover you. Is there a *den* or a labyrinth there?"—"There is, and it is dark and horrible."—"You drew *me* out of one that was indeed dark and horrible, and I think you have tended me so well I should have strength to extricate you."—"I fear you have not," said Annibal in a hollow voice, "no power can avail to reach or to raise me."

—“Heavens! you talk and look as if you had fallen into it already.”—“Not yet, I have not yet,” said he absently; “but do not press me to walk in the forest.” She ceased, for she perceived he was answering his own thoughts; nor did she venture to mention the subject again; for though on all others Annibal spoke with the fervour of a lover, and the chaste solicitude of a husband, yet the slightest allusion to the forest, or to his nightly excursions there, at once overshadowed him with a gloom, which was only interrupted by starts of moody abstraction.

Yet she observed, that when unsolicited he often stole forth, and returned with the quick step and startled eagerness of one who feared or fled from pursuit. At length Ildefonsa found herself no longer compelled by weakness to retard their journey to Puzzoli, for which Filippo set out to make preparation. The joy

joy this intelligence inspired she shared in an eminent degree herself.

In spite of the high and well grounded confidence she felt in Annibal's pure and noble love, her timidity was terrified by her dangers and adventurous prospects, and her delicacy retreated from being the daily associate of men who, however generous, tender, and respectful, repelled her from the very circumstance of their sex. Her confidence resembled the image of Cybele, which resisted every effort to remove it till it was drawn along by the *zone of a virgin*. Her feelings, delicate, vivid, and evanescent, resembled the Peri of the eastern mythology, whose subtle essence is subsisted by perfumes, and whom a grosser aliment than the fragrance of flowers would confound and destroy.

Early in the evening of the day previous to their departure, Filippo, who had exerted more than usual diligence, arrived at the hut of the forest,
with

with every requisite for their journey. He had engaged horses and a guide, whom they were to meet in the morning at the skirts of the wood; and with the natural joy of a domestic, who believes where there is splendour there must be safety, he described the munificent affection and superb palace of the prior, where he expected soon to behold them blazing in magnificence and fortified by power, scarce remembering the mischiefs of vulgar malignity at the distance to which they were removed, and dispensing pardon or punishment to the wretches from whose dungeons they had recently emerged themselves. Annibal and Ildefonsa listened to his sanguine promises with confidence, tempered by remembered sufferings; and satisfaction, exalted by the benevolence of mutual passion. “And shall we,” said Ildefonsa, “remember the hut that sheltered us in the forest, and the cluster of pine under which we met
in

in the garden of the convent?"—"I shall," said Annibal, "for there you first owned you loved me."—"And I," said Ildefonsa, "for I past every interval of your absence I could spare on that spot. Will you forgive me, Annibal? I thought those hours even pleasanter than those to whose remembrance I devoted them. There is a nameless charm which the places where we have met those we love derive even from the loss of their presence, I can delight in, but I cannot define it. 'Tis the faded wreath, 'tis the dim light of the banquet that has ceased, but whose luxuries still linger on the sense; 'tis the fairy circlet, that prints the field with *brighter* green when the elf-dance is done, and the whisper of their music is low."—"You are an enthusiast, love!"—"I am, and I am glad of it, for you are gloomy; life and reality have not joys enough for you, and I have power to draw them from another sphere,
even

even from that where I sought them before I knew *you*. When the wayward fit is on you, I will spread wings you have not yet seen, and fly into other regions ; and there, like the sylphs I have imagined I saw in a summer noon, employing a hundred tiny pencils to paint the rose-leaf, and fluttering their fairy plumage to give coolness to the breeze, or diffuse the breath of the lily ; so will I flutter about, collecting stores of mental sweetness and beauty to pour over your head, like the balm of the enchanter, that dissolves the sullen spell of sleep. I have heard of masquerades in the world, I will put my mind in masquerade for *you* ; I will call up the airy shapes of existence, *past, future, impossible* ; I will invest them in shapes now sportive, now solemn, now wild ; I will feast you with forms of visionary beauty, brighter because unseen by the world's eye ; I will bid them pour strange music in your ear, sweeter be-
cause

cause none but yours ever caught it.”—

“Sweet, sweet love!” said Annibal kissing her hands with unresisted fervour, “you witch me with your blandishments; will you be thus lovely, thus enchanting in the world? will your fancy flutter thus wildly, and warble thus sweetly in the gross atmosphere that shall soon enclose it?”

“I do not know; I have heard that the world is fatal to mental pleasures; that few who mix in it preserve their fancy, and fewer still their sensibility. But granting that my feelings were sometimes the victims of deception or disappointment, and selfish levity derided what it never experienced, still, as those feelings withered, my judgment would ripen, and the tears that flowed over my young mind’s wasted prime would be assuaged by the lesson that their fall had ameliorated my heart.” Annibal, who had fallen into the “wayward fit” as she

spake, now interrupted her with conjectures relative to the picture which so strongly resembled her, and the mystery which overshadowed her birth and infancy, so strangely under the control of a nameless persecutor.

“Nay, if you are for a romance,” said Ildefonsa playfully, I will call for Filippo’s maudoline, and sing you a sad tale of a lady and a knight, so very deep in love and woe, none ever resembled them but the *Fugitives of the Forest*.” At this moment they heard Filippo touching his maudoline in the porch of the hut, and caught by the wild prelude, listened to a ballad he had learnt from some woodland minstrel.

L

Oh, far he fares! though his step is light,
His heart is heavy, sore;
And dank around fell the sweepy shower,
And shrilly the wind did roar.

Oh!

II.

Oh! was it a flash of lightning blue
That lit the briery dell,
Or rush from cottage lattice low,
Or taper from hermit cell?

III.

Whate'er it be he faster hies,
Whate'er it be he draws nigh,
And down in briery dell so dusk
A circled dance did spy.

IV.

And round about, a vassal rout,
And some that descants rung;
Too wild, I wis, for mortal ear,
Too sweet for mortal tongue.

V.

"What cheer, what cheer, my revel feere?"
This seely wight did say;
"I joy to see your featly round,
And list your roundelay."

VI.

"And who art thou (bold wight we trow),
That hearest the elf-voice sing;
For we be nightly fays that here
Do dance amid the ring?"

Then

VII.

Then all by unknown impulse strange,
 Amid the rout ran he,
 While round about the changed shapes
 Did dance with shrieking glee.

VIII.

And every form, ere now so fair,
 Grew grim and ghastly to view ;
 And thin as mist were their shadowy shapes,
 And dim their spectre hue.

IX.

And the taper's light was quench'd amain,
 And the music a howl became ;
 Then shook the ground, and the dancers round
 Were wafted in veering flame.

X.

Then his heart beat quick, and his breath grew thick,
 And he sunk to the ground outright ;
 And with a shriek the shadowy crew
 Evanish'd from his sight.

XI.

Beware, beware, all ye that hear,
 As my harp's wild chords I ring !
 Beware ye stray through briery dell
 Where nightly fairies sing.

They

They were pleased with the wild melody of this ballad ; but when Ildefonsa began her tale of “ love and woe,” Anibal listened as to the inmate of another region. She had always the power of recalling other times, and pouring around her hearer the imaginary *scenery* of her song ; she looked the very genius of romantic minstrelsy ; her voice was like the sound for which fancy listens amid ruins ; her song woke a beam of memory to play on faint and distant images, as the moon, hailed by the nightingale, advances to shed a melancholy light on the mouldering forms of antiquity.

The Bower of Rose and Eglantine.

I.

Come, sit with me in twilight bower,
 The bower of rose and eglantine ;
 For this still light and evening hour,
 Best suit *with such a lay as mine.*

'Tis

II.

'Tis moonshine all, the lattice fringed
With rosiere rich, the garden pal'd;
And the green path, touch'd by that light,
Glistered like sheeny emerald.

III.

'Twas silence all; deeply she sat
On terrass'd tower, and crested spire,
Hush'd the low rippling of the moat,
And woo'd the moonshine's stilly fire.

IV.

'Mid those fair scenes, Oh! who so fair
As she with pearly coronal?
She leads along a stately knyght,
Whose dark form gleams in ebon mail.

V.

Like knyght and ladye fayre they seem,
Who meet for love in moonshine bower,
Yet sadde was seene that ladye's cheare,
And sadder was her paramoure.

VI.

She had him through the garden's maze,
Where faery-rings the green bank studde,
Where opal hues of shadowy light
Dimm'd orient flower and rubied bud.

She

VII.

She had him to the margent trim
 Of fountayne that in moonlight played,
 Where garden-gleams, and tremulous bowers,
 And silver sleepe of veiled flowers,
 Like land of faery seemed, throughe mist,
 Its soft and shadowy archings made.

VIII.

But when she had him to the bower,
 The bower of rose and eglantine,
 How fail my harp's sad tones to tell,
 Oh! woeful knyght, that look of thine!

IX.

He shook the mail on his harnessed side,
 He shook the dark plume on his crest,
 He dared not on that ladye look,
 Though she hung and wept upon his breast.

X.

That ladye was as bright of hue
 As ever shone in princelye bower,
 All pale for grief, but sure more fayre
 Than if she blushed in beautye's flower,

XI.

For she had loved that statelye knyghte,
 In bowers of rose and eglantine,

And left him for a royal love,*
Whose gawds around her coldly shine.

XII.

And fickle woman's worthless pride
Drew tears that o'er her wan cheek fell,
And sorrow and shame had marred her prime,
And *stained the charms she prized too well.*

XIII.

And still the thought of her first love
Did hurt her mind with sweet annoy,
It lit a dream more bright than hope,
It woke a grief more dear than joy.

XIV.

For it was not hope, and it was not joy
That woke her sunk eye's wandering fire,
'Twas memory, wooing passion's shade,
'Twas grief that glowed o'er dead desire.

XV.

As half she sunk into the bower,
The fleckered bower so tremulous bright,
And her wan cheek, like winter rose,
Show'd through the bowery foliage light—

* Mary, sister to Henry the Eighth of England, was attached to Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, one of the most accomplished knights of his age; she married the King of France.

“ Oh

XVI.

“ Oh come with me into the bower,
The bower of rose and eglantine,
And be my *spirit's* paramour
'Mid scenes that say—Thou still art mine.

XVII.

“ I do not think of thy burnished eye,
Or ringlets of thy dark brown hair,
Or curved brow of ebon quaint,
Or cheek of summer's sunny paint,
Love's *forms* are faded from my mind,
And, but its *soul*, nought lingers there.

XVIII.

“ Like spirits that in moonshine meet,
We'll *talk* of love's evanished bliss,
And mingle memory's shadows sweet,
With parting passion's last cold kiss.

XIX.

“ And far and faint, as cloudy tints
That still through westering twilight show,
Dim blazon of departed day,
Forgotten forms of bliss shall flow.

XX.

“ Then come with me into the bower,
The bower of rose and eglantine,
And be my spirit's paramour,
'Mid scenes that say—Thou still art mine.’”

XXI.

The moon was on her tear-bright eye,
The moon was on her breast of snow,
He turned him from the witching sight,
And faltered faint, and deep, and low.

XXII.

“ I cannot come within thy bower,
I cannot melt in moonlight grove,
All these fair scenes are dark and lorn,
For, lady, I no longer love.

XXIII.

“ Yet still I see how fair thou art,
Too well I see thou’rt wond’rous fair ;
As the lone pilgrim’s parting feet
Still turn the twilight fane to greet,
Though long my heart has left thy shrine,
Mine eye still loves to linger there.

XXIV.

“ ’Twere perilous in secret bower
To parly with a form like thine,
And list that bland and breathed spell
That woos the woven eglantine.

XXV.

“ I am a knight of faith unstain’d,
And thou art an high and royal dame,
We may not love like chambered page,
Nor tempt the losel’s wanton shame.

“ Oh !

XXVI.

“ Oh! lady, lov’d so passing well,
 In dear devotion truly held!
 Why was thy love so light and weak?
 Why was thy heart by folly spell’d?

XXVII.

“ When my nerved arm was first in fight,
 When hoary eld my voice rever’d,
 When honour plumed my youthful crest,
 When ladies loved and warriors fear’d—

XXVIII.

“ Then thou, like a most blighting frost,
 Didst come upon my glorious youth,
 O’erthrew my valour’s stately stem,
 And nipp’d the buds of vernal truth.

XXIX.

“ My wane of life comes sadly on,
 My voice is heard in halls no more,
 My lance has rusted by my side,
 The pride of knightly thought is o’er.

XXX.

“ And would’st thou *now*—Oh! lady cease,
 Tempt not my dark and dreamless rest,
 I’ll bear my load of silent woe,
 All, but the fear thou art not blest.

“ The

XXXI.

“ The diamonds sheen that bind thy brows,
Are mock’d by clouds that sadden there,
And they again are dimm’d by tears,
To me than gems more rich, more rare.

XXXII.

“ Thou art not blest—Oh! that thou wert,
For by my heart’s evanish’d joy
So might not false love taint thy bloom,
And late and vain regrets annoy.

XXXIII.

“ I’d doff this mailed coat of pride,
Wind round mine arm the rosary,
Vail to the cowl my helmed head,
And breathe my life in prayer for thee.

XXXIV.

“ Thy dying love’s forgotten lair
Should be some hermit’s tapered shed,
Thy buried love’s untrophied tomb
Some sainted valley’s lowly bed.

XXXV.

“ But oh! that pale and pined cheek
Bids e’en that hopeless wish be vain,
That wish whose wild, *unselfish* aim
Now soothes with joy, now stings with pain.

“ Oh!

XXXVI.

“ Oh! come enchantress, from thy bower,
I may not, must not, talk with thee,
Come but to tell me what I feel—
Tell—is it joy, or agony.

XXXVII.

“ Still on its light, dew-spangled spray
Hang my warm tear-drops unremov'd,
And still those breathing roses seem,
Oh God!—as sweet as when I lov'd.

XXXVIII.

“ Oh! come enchantress, from thy bower,
I may not, must not talk with thee,
But I can tell thee what I feel—
The *bliss* of love's strong agony.”

XXXIX.

He led her from the bowery shade,
A tear was in her humbled eye,
He led her to the palace-pile,
No ear might catch their unbreath'd sigh.

XL.

But vestal stole, and penance pale,
That lady's woful ruth did prove,
When told the knell of the requiem bell
That lovely knight had died for love.

To song again succeeded “ converse sweet,” and Annibal, whose thoughts had been occupied by the wonders of recent safety and escape, now enquired by what means the extraordinary appearances at the funeral (when he believed her dead,) had been produced and conducted. “ Of that strange transaction,” said Ildefonsa, “ I can know but little, but believe that as my death was determined on by my invisible enemy and the abbess, so it was resolved to impose on those who might presume to inquire and examine, by a funeral; in which I was to assume the aspect of a natural death. Had any violence been used, this had been impossible; from the effects, therefore, I conjecture I was lulled by an opiate into the resemblance of death, and in this state I was exposed as a corse, and in this state (after the tumult occasioned by your interposition had ceased) was conveyed to the cemetery

tery of the convent, where your brother rescued me from assassination. It is probable the operation of the drug was limited to a certain period, during which no violence could rouse me; for of the tumult at my funeral, or the wound given me in the vault, I have not the slightest remembrance, though when my faculties returned, they returned without disturbance or imperfection. This is all I am able to tell or to conjecture, except that I believe the malignity of my enemies was accelerated by the report of your attempts to liberate me; and that therefore my existence is of more consequence than they have been willing to allow me to believe."

Annibal was about to join her in this conclusion, when Filippo grasping his master's arm, pointed with eager silence to the chimney, down which a dark object was slowly descending. They caught it as it fell into the flames, and examined it with eyes that doubted
their

their own evidence—it was the *hood of a Monk's habit* ! With an immediate impulse, Annibal rushed out, and at the same moment called to Filippo for his carbine. Filippo, who hastened to him, found him already plunged far into the forest, while Ildefonsa, with fruitless precaution, extinguished the light, and awaited their return in terror that hardly breathed. They returned after some time pale and spent ; Filippo could not, and Annibal would not, tell any thing. He begged of Ildefonsa, in a voice of perturbation, not to be disturbed, and breathed every moment an impatient wish for morning. Morning, however, was yet far distant, and Annibal examining again the charge of Filippo's carbine, withdrew to the porch of the hut, where he watched in silence. About an hour had elapsed, when a loud shriek from Ildefonsa recalled him. She averred earnestly, that she had seen the face and part of the figure

figure of a tall man in dark drapery, who for some time continued at the casement, viewing her intently. She confessed herself much enfeebled by her fears, and rising from her couch, intreated Annibal not to quit her for the remainder of the night.

The porch of the hut was secured therefore by an immense log of pine, that had been the table of the recluse, and the party endeavoured to obtain such rest as can be snatched at intervals of fear. In a short time, however, Ildelfonsa, whose spirits were too much agitated for sleep, observed Annibal rise, and go to the casement, where with a variety of silent but earnest gesture, he appeared to confer with some one without. She watched him till her terror could no longer be repressed. “Annibal,” said she gently, “why will you not sleep?”—“I had rather never sleep, than be visited by such dreams.”—“I fear
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they are melancholy, indeed.”—“ How do you know? What have you heard, or *fancied* you heard”—“ Thrice I have heard you in your broken sleep repeat those mournful words which were the last I heard from you in the garden of the convent.”—“ What words were those?”—“ I cannot repeat them, they were about some *prediction*.”—“ True, oh true! Are you sure you heard nothing more?”—“ Nothing more.”—“ If you should, Ildefonsa, do not believe it; imagine it the voice of fancy; do not think it proceeds from me; men cannot answer for what they utter in their sleep; but *should* you hear any thing, remember to tell it me, and then forget it as soon as you can.”—“ I will.”—“ Do not deceive me.”—“ Deceive you?”—“ Yes, what can I trust, when my own senses are false?”—“ Trust *me*.”—“ Ah! many have been betrayed by those who watched their sleep; I will

I will not sleep again ; would it were morn."

Ildefonsa for the remainder of the night counterfeited sleep ; in the morning they were conducted to the opposite verge of the forest, by Filippo, where the guide with horses and mules awaited them. Filippo had suggested the policy of taking a circuitous road to Puzzoli, (in order to avoid the vicinity of the convent, or the village) which in consequence of this arrangement they did not expect to reach till the close of day. They stopped at a small village at noon, and proceeded on their journey in the mild decline of a genial winter day.

Security and happiness were now so near, that it was perverseness to distrust them. An emersion from dungeons and death, from struggles with the devastations of nature, and a rude shelter in the recesses of a forest, into the pomp of wealth, the luxuries of art, and the beneficence of affection, and this illumed

by the rich and radiant light which youth and love shed on the perspective of life, such a prospect was enough to dazzle mental sight even stronger, and better accustomed to the fluctuating objects of life than theirs. They inwardly congratulated themselves on their distance from dangers they would not now mention to each other, and listened with complacency to the garrulous gaiety of Filippo, and the vaunting prolixity of the guide, who, by his own narrative, had encountered and escaped more dangers, than Hannibal ever met on the Alps, or Cambyzes in the Desert.

“ I do not like that man,” said Ildefonsa, “ there is a mixture of weakness and fierceness in his face I have seldom seen.”—“ I have *seen* no face but yours since we quitted the hut,” said Annibal. At this moment the guide suddenly turned in a direction opposite to that they had expected. “ Where is it you are going ?”
said

said Filippo. "Where I was *hired* to go," said the man. "But this cannot be the direction to Puzzoli," said Annibal. "Will you not permit me to know the road better than you, Signor?" replied the man. "I will not permit you to know the points of East and West better than me," said Annibal. "But you—you forget, Signor, that I am obliged to take a circuitous road."—"It is not necessary," said Annibal, "since we have quitted the vicinity of the forest."—"It is more so than ever," said the man. "I repeat, it is of no consequence," said Annibal. "It is of as much consequence to *me* as my life," replied the man. Annibal believing he alluded to the necessity of his safe and faithful conduct as a guide, ceased to contend with him, and quitting the high road they pursued a heathy track, whose limits were skirted by a distant wood. "Do you conduct many by this road?" said

said Ildefonsa.—“Not lately, Signora,” said the man, “but I have in my time conducted a number.”—“It is at least a secret one,” said Filippo—“There can be none more so,” replied the guide. “And safe and certain?” said Annibal. “Perfectly certain, Signor.”—“Its gloom oppresses me,” said Ildefonsa. “I never heard a traveller utter a complaint of it, after his journey was done,” observed the man. The track now terminated in the wood, in which no continuance of road or path was visible, but the guide entered it without hesitation, and they followed him. Here they wandered for some time amid the entanglements of an untrodden wood, when the guide suddenly stopped. “I fear I have lost my way,” said he, growing pale with unaffected fears. “How!” exclaimed the travellers. “*They* are not here,” said the man, with unrepressed terror, “and I am lost.”—“Villain, you

you *are* lost," said Filippo, levelling a carbine at him. "Hold," said Annibal, who, though in despair, was deliberate, he rode up to the man, and griped him by the throat, "Villain, you have betrayed us, and betrayed yourself, you have sold both body and soul to perdition. Hear me, villain, you have but one chance for existence—conduct us from this forest, and conduct us safely; my servant and I will ride on each side of you—come here, Filippo—on each side of you, villain! each with a loaded carbine at your head; and, by my immortal soul, if I but see you falter, or wince, or *think* awry, (for I shall see your very thoughts,) that moment your brains shall be scattered about the road, and your soul be the prey of him who has tempted you to murder!" The man listened, half dead, to his menaces, and turned tremblingly to quit the wood, but at that moment a shrill whistle

whistle pierced their ears, and a number, with whom it was madness to contend, poured around them. Annibal and Filippo turned on them in the fierceness of despair, and the party enraged at the appearance of resistance, prepared to fire. Annibal, at the same moment, discharged his carbine, and then rushed forward with his sword, when a shot from a villain, whom he had wounded, grazed his wrist, and compelled him to drop his weapon; endeavouring to recover it with his left hand, he lost his balance, and falling to the ground, was stunned by a blow from one of the assassins' horses, who was terrified at feeling his rider fall beneath his feet. In the meantime Filippo, who, in the impulse of a just revenge had discharged his carbine at the head of the wretch who had betrayed them, before he had time again to load it, was assailed with such determined fury, as made it evident his
life

life was the object of the ruffians. He defended himself with courage, but when he saw his master fall, and the lady, who had fainted, surrounded by the band, his arm grew weak, and he perished almost without aiming another blow.

CHAP. XX.

Thou must speak that which, in its darkest hour
Pushed to extremity, 'midst ringing dizziness,
The ear of desperation doth receive,
And I *must listen to it.*

MISS BAILY'S "RAYNER."

WHEN Annibal's senses returned, he found himself extended on a bed. He looked round, he was in a low, mean apartment, dimly lit; it was night; a lamp burned near him, and as he distinguished objects, he thought he saw a dark form moving in the distance. Nothing was plain or palpable either to
his

his mind or senses ; he felt as if a motion, a breath would dissolve the objects around him, and plunge him again into insensibility, or the darkness and dreadful imagery of the forest. But when he recognized the figure which advanced on hearing him move, and stood fixedly beside him, he dashed down his head, and hiding it in all the coverings he could catch, exclaimed, “ Let me be lost again ! ” His persecutor, however, would not suffer him to relapse into insensibility. Cordials were prepared, and when they failed an irresistible stimulant was applied. He mentioned the name of Ildefonsa, and Annibal instantly started up, quickened to the most keen and vivid perceptions of misery. But to awake or satisfy inquiries on the subject of Ildefonsa was not the purpose of the tempter ; he only mentioned *her* to introduce the prediction concerning their ill-fated loves (which he had uttered in the garden of the Ursuline

line

line convent to Annibal), and to appeal to its fulfilment. “The *object of your love*,” said he, “*has been torn from you at the moment of possession, and life has changed its complexion at the moment it was becoming bright with hope and joy. Am I a deceiver now?*”—“You are a fiend,” said Annibal. “You rave still,” said Schemoli. “No, my faculties are *too perfect*; this is night, we are in solitude, you are Lucifer, and I am your prey.”—“My *minister*, and in vain have you sought to shun me; though you take the wings of the morning, I must follow you. Annibal, never can I leave you till the deed for which I am doomed to follow you be done by your hand; the chains which bind a spirit in pain, I know your weak human hand trembles to unlock. I should plead to you for relief in vain; but think on *yourself*, think on your wanderings, your persecutions, your fear-spent, spectre-ridden life. The hand
that

that dissolves my chain, shall also dissolve that which binds in unnatural union a human and a departed spirit. Free me from jeopardy, and you free yourself from *me*; resist, and you drag about with you a restless wanderer, whose shadow shall darken you at noon, and whose feet shall be planted by your midnight bed." Annibal was silent. "What signifies that waving of your hand; can it reverse the laws of the nether world? You have resisted them, and what are you now? a fugitive, an exile, a dependant, the outcast of your family; the imprecations of your father pursue you; you are blasted in hope, and love, and fortune. What are you now?"—"I AM INNOCENT!" said Annibal. "Yes," said the tempter, "if to resist the laws of destiny be innocent."

Their conference continued all night. It appeared from several passages of it, that since his first visits to the convent
 where

where Ildefonsa resided, he had been incessantly haunted by Schemoli in his usual and undisguised form. He met him near the convent, he crossed him in his evening wanderings, he even appeared in his chamber at the house where he lived, ever upbraiding him with his wayward and foolish flight from what it was equally impossible to avoid or to destroy; ever maddening him with the suggestion of that subject so dark and horrible, which had been the topic of their conferences in the prison chamber at Muralto. Annibal's dejection (visible both to Ildefonsa and Filippo) had kept pace with his gloomy acquiescence in the belief of an influence exerted over him, with which to contend was alike impossible and impious. This dejection he had eminently betrayed in his last conference with Ildefonsa in the garden of the convent, when he repeated to her a prediction with which his shadowy tormentor

mentor had menaced him but an hour before. He had also betrayed it when Ildefonsa pressed him to wander into the forest; for in the forest he had beheld his persecutor, and in the forest he had again been tempted to that crime, whose imaginary burden sat so heavy on his soul. All the predictions of evil were now verified, and the objects whose presence had suspended the powers of his mind from dwelling on the subject perpetually obtruded on it, were now removed. He had no longer any powers of resistance or disbelief; he saw before him a being who, he had every reason to believe, had a power and commission not to be disobeyed. *Poison* could not suspend his existence, nor distance of space his agency. His tale, to a superstitious mind enfeebled by recent calamity, was irresistibly imposing; and his injunctions, horrible as they were to nature, were justified by his tale.

Annibal's

Annibal's mind was indeed naturally strong, and sluggish in its operations; but its strength was misapplied. It pursued visionry and falsehood with the conscientious energy of truth, and when it had found it, embraced and adhered to it with a vigorous tenacity that might have honoured virtue. Thus he was betrayed by his very virtues. The stern activity of his intellect had only been employed in the acquisition of dangerous principles, and his unbending firmness of heart only insured that the blow he struck would be unerring, whether its impulse was derived from vice or from virtue. Such was Annibal in his best hours; but now, enfeebled by bodily suffering, distracted by mental pain, his superstition aggravated by his conscience, and his primitive and intimate bias of mind confirmed by external impressions, such as the soberest intellects could hardly oppose, he yielded without resistance

ance of reason, but not without struggles of passion potent and terrible. The last convulsions of the human mind, the dissolution of the *moral principle*; the utter abdication of the *influence* of reason, while her *power* is retained only to abuse it; the frightful misrule of passion, assumed as a principle and exalted into a virtue, *this* it cannot be expected to exhibit; and if expected, it is not possible. Those dreadful revolutions of the mental system oftener occur in silence, rarely express themselves by groans or gestures; and if they ever employ words, they are only exclamations and inarticulate cries of passion, such as nothing but reality can faithfully represent, and if really represented, would be fled from in horror.

The *unhappy young man yielded!*——
 But when he had yielded, he exclaimed in agony, “ If there were but a parallel in the history of human nature for mine; if there were but another human being
 like

like *me* beset, and lost like *me*, I would not utter a murmur!"—"There is," said Schemoli. "It is impossible," said his victim. "I will produce him to you," said Schemoli. "It is impossible," repeated Annibal. "He is *your brother*," said Schemoli.

A long pause succeeded this tremendous disclosure, during which Annibal's mind, traversing the distant and connecting the remote, arrived at the conclusion which a *meeting* with his brother might have long ago supplied. He rose from the bed on which he had been tossing in agony. "Who, then, are *you*? answer, while I have breath to ask you—answer, who are you?"—"I am the *stranger of the vault*! I am the *spirit of the prison chamber of Muralto*!"—"And my brother!"—"His course has been parallel with yours, and its termination will be the same."—"Was this the deed to which he was fated?"—"It was."—"And has he consented?"—"Let himself

himself tell you," said Schemoli quitting the apartment.

Annibal did not seek to employ the interval of his absence in recollection, for he was now in a state of mind in which reflection was impossible and solitude insupportable. Had Ippolito been disclosed to him in a blaze of lightning, or been dashed at his feet by a whirlwind, it would scarce have drawn from him an exclamation. In a few moments Schemoli returned, accompanied by Ippolito. It was Ippolito, but what a change! Annibal, who had beheld him but a little before he set out for Naples, in the richest glow of beauty and flush of enjoyment, now beheld him a skeleton, meagre, keen, and fiery, the very image of *spirit* wasting and preying on the ruins of *matter*. Grey hairs were profusely scattered amid his bright locks, and a wild, restless fire wandered in his sunk eye. They looked at each other without speaking for some time; but

Schemoli

Schemoli perceiving the dawn breaking through the narrow windows, hastily closed them, secured the door, and trimming the lamp, retired, after having excluded every gleam of daylight.

The two brothers were left alone; there were no starts of passion, no sallies of tragic violence; they were beyond them now: no two men of this world, sitting down to confer on their joint business in the cold terms of life, ever discussed it more dispassionately. They now discovered what might have been discovered long before, that under different forms and trains of suggestion, they had been led by the same hand and to the same point. But this discovery suggested no fear or *hope* of deception, the *single* exertion of such powers appeared beyond the reach of man; *united*, therefore, it was an evidence that the being who exerted them could not be human.

Ippolito repeated to his brother the
circum-

circumstances that had occurred to him since his quitting Naples. "On the day," said he, "that I was visited by the stranger, as I have called him, in the prison of the Inquisition, in Puzzoli, an earthquake shattered to atoms the tower in which I was confined, and liberated me. At that time I would have leaped into fire, water, earth, to have escaped from him. I am not so weak now as to believe that mortal elements can protect me from him. I sprung out upon a mole which extended from the island rock, upon which the prison stood; half the surviving inhabitants of the town were crowded on it, embarking in vessels, barges, any thing that would bear them from the land. I leaped on board the first I saw, it was a small trading vessel bound to Sicily. The steps of a fugitive, and the looks of a madman, were no wonder, and no disqualification in that hour of distraction. I had money, too,

too, as I since found, for I scattered it last night among a group of pilgrims who were going to beg absolution for one of their body who had committed a *murder* ! As I sprung on the deck, the last words of the stranger rung in my ears. ‘ Bury yourself under a mountain, and it shall roll back from you ! rush to the *ocean*, and *it* shall throw you on the shore again ! plunge into the grave, and the grave shall break up and resign you to your fate !’ We stood out to sea ; I paced the deck all night ; I knew not the omens which the seamen knew. I saw them pale and shivering, and asked them what they feared, since they had left the *enemy* behind ? and forgot their answer, if they *did* answer me. As I stood among them, a ball of fire settled on the stern, where it glowed blue, and red, and white ; and then gliding down the decks, disappeared without singeing a rope. The sailors shook their heads ;
the

the surface of the sea was dark and still. It was now night, but we could distinctly hear the cries of destruction from the shore; *they* could, they said, and many a distracted soul on board echoed the imaginary wail of father, and wife, and child. I heard but one voice; it was that which spake to us just now.

The wind fell; we became quite becalmed. A luminous sheet spread over the surface of the sea, whose particles looked solid and distinct, and sparkling like stars: a rope let into the waters was drawn up dripping with liquid fire. The passengers bending over the sides said they saw strange things in the deep; wrecks of ships long lost, and shapes of others that were to be, and forms that lay like dead men at the bottom, and others that beckoned to them with blue swollen fingers, and called on them in voices like the roaring of waters. I looked also, and saw nothing but the recesses of the vault,
the

the damned flitting of its impy forms, and the bloody heaving breast, and the *eternal* dagger. I could look no more. There came a sound upon the waters, ~~not~~ like thunder, for it was more terrible, it seemed as if its force alone rent the mast and sails, for they fluttered around us in fragments. The vessel flew before it like a gossamer upon a summer breeze. It stopped; the ocean tossed and heaved, and its whole bottom came surging up, with tides of sand, and surf, and wreck; and bodies that had lain there rooted in the bed of ages, things that dreamt of rest till doom's day, they rose whirling above us, mixing with the strife of upper air a chaos of elementary wrath and ruin; then pouring down, deluged us with tides of solid fire, and melted stones, and boiling sand, and sulphurous rain. The vessel half on fire, half buried in the water, staved into a thousand fragments; on those fragments the shrieking crew
dashing

dashing themselves, tried to reach the shore, which was not two miles distant. I was the only one who reached it alive ; fate was careful for none but me ; the world was not to lose its spectacle and its scourge. I was thrown on a bare solitary point of shore, about half a mile from Puzzoli. The stranger was standing there ; lightning hissed around his head, and the ocean burst at his feet ; neither could hurt *us*. I fell, spent and breathless, at his feet, and he said to me, “ rush to the ocean, and it shall throw you back on the shore again.” From that hour I became *his* ; he led me to this desert hut, where I have past two days without food, or sleep, or prayer. I drink abundantly ; my dreams are terrible, they last all day ; but reality will banish them. No waking can be so fearful as this ~~sleep~~ ; mine eyes are open, but my soul is in a trance of heavy restlessness, of conscious suspension, in which it is undisturbed.

by *human* thought, to which even the human voice is an alarm."

Here Schemoli interrupted their conference. He came to prescribe the mode and form of the deed they no longer shrunk to hear named; he unfolded his plan, arranged every part with cold and dreadful precision, without either weakness or sanguinary vaunting; he debated what was important, and he adjusted what was subordinate. He was no longer opposed or interrupted. In consequence of his plan, it was settled that Ippolito should go for that day to Naples, and that Annibal should depart to the seat of the transaction. They were to meet at night.

They were now rising to depart, when Ippolito, in whose heart the yearnings of nature lingered, turned and looked on his brother. Annibal extended his arms, Ippolito sunk into them, and they wept on each other's necks, and kissed each other; their last fraternal, their last human tears fell
on

on each other's dry, wasted cheeks. But they knew their *task*, and smote away the warm drops, and set their teeth, and drew their breath hard, and tried to belie God's work and look like villains. They turned for relief to Schemoli, and met amazement. *He was on his knees*, in agony of prayer; the sweat drops stood on his brow; his body was wound into the dust! They gazed without comment, for they were deprived now nearly of all power of wonder, or any of further fear.

Had they not, the attitude of Schemoli would have inspired even *fear*. To see Lucifer surrounded by livid lightnings is less shocking to the imagination than to see him in the garb of an angel of light. They separated, and found horses prepared to convey them to Naples and to the neighbourhood of Muralto.

CHAP. XXI.

Hic quos durus amor crudeli tabe peredit,
Secreti celant calles, et myrtea circum
Sylva tegit; curæ non ipsâ in morte relinquunt.

VIRGIL, *Æn.* vi. 442.

Not far from thence the mournful fields appear,
So called from lovers that inhabit there.
The souls whom that unhappy flame invades,
In secret solitude and myrtle shades,
Make endless moans, and, pining with desire,
Lament too late their unextinguish'd fire.

DRYDEN.

IPPOLITO arrived in Naples about dusk. To the servants at the palace, who hardly knew him, he addressed neither question nor order. He hastened to

his apartment, around which he looked vacantly for some time, and sadly *on the bed*; he then rushed into the garden, where Cyprian now spent almost all his time in a little hermitage, where he was entirely occupied by devotion. He saw Ippolito approach, and shrieking with the wildest voice of joy, remained riveted to the spot. Ippolito entered the hermitage; Cyprian flung his arms around him, but the next moment started from him, and gazed on him in silence. “Do *you* shudder at the sight of me, too?” said Ippolito. “It is his voice, it ~~is~~ his voice!” said Cyprian; “but for that I could not have known you.”—“You have scarce seen yet how much I am changed; you have not seen my heart.”—“Oh! where have you been, and why have you tarried so long?”—“I know not where I have been; never from Naples in *thought*. But *you*, Cyprian, gracious heaven! where have *you* been, measuring your grave?

grave? Is it this dim rising moon that deceives me? you look as pale as the dead, you are wasted to a shadow!"—

"Am I? I believe I am; I am spent and worn watching for you; I am very ill, my eyes are almost wept away."—

"And why are you in this cold vault-like hut?"—"Tis my only abode, Ippolito; 'tis a structure I raised in memory of one you have perhaps forgotten, but who never forgot *you*. Here I have past my days and nights, thinking on you, and praying for *her*."—"And this little mound with the cross on it is her grave?"—"It is; and this inscription is to be laid on it when her remains are brought there." Ippolito read the lines by the light of the moon.

The Inscription.

"In early youth she had sensibilities that were strong, and an imagination that

that was stronger. Her mind, therefore, fluttered in pursuit of ideal happiness, and ideal happiness was all she was ever doomed to know; for she loved, she loved where to hope was madness, yet to be disappointed was to be lost. From that moment life was darkened by a shade, which the gleams of passion's wild and wayward joy sometimes *chequered*, never *dispelled*. She sat down in lone and unsuspected misery, and wooed a dream for comfort. But there is a place where the wailings of sorrow cease, and even the pulse of passion is cold and still; there the foot of mortal pilgrimage turns in hope; there the world weary spirit reaches and rests; *there* she rests at last with her beloved, her heart moulders near *him* for whose love it was broken, her lip wastes near *his* for which it withered with pining. There she rests at last with her beloved, and none can now divide, and none will now condemn her. Let
those

those who would arraign her errors think upon her sufferings: those who *can* weep for her sufferings will feel they were repaid by her end."

"It is sad," said Ippolito; "but I have no time for sickly sorrow now, I came here only to depart, I must begone this hour."—"Begone! where, wherefore, where is it you must begone?" said Cyprian. "I know not whither; into some country dark and unknown, into some land that is very far off; but still I know not yet where I go."—"Oh! why is this? Oh, my heart sickens to hear you!"—"I have done a thing against which the laws are strongly armed; the world frowns upon me, fortune has nothing good for me; I must be gone to-night."—"Oh, God! what is this that comes in clouds and darkness? let me see it, let me but see it. *What can* you have been tempted to that can expose you to danger? The laws in this country are
not

not so rigid to the rich and powerful. What is it you have done?"—"What is that which chases a man from his country, which marks him with horror and reprobation wherever he is followed and discovered, which—" "Oh, I cannot tell! horrid thoughts are crowding on me too fast to utter; but if it be all I fear, the habits of society are but too favourable to such offences, you need not fly for killing your enemy in a duel."—"I did not kill him in a duel, he was no enemy of mine; in cold-blooded malevolence I butchered one who had never offended me, with such circumstances of horrid fiendish cruelty, that nature would make the very stones of the hall of justice cry out against me if I were acquitted."

Cyprian fell to the ground, Ippolito approached to raise him. "I am strong, I am well, I am, indeed." He struggled to say, "This is but folly,
 o 3 nothing;

nothing; let us begone this moment, I am strong and ready to go.”—“You are strong! Ah, Cyprian, I knew it would be thus, I knew I was a cursed wretch, forsaken by nature and affection. No, you cannot go with me, you cannot *bear* me; those sunk eyes, those shaking hands, those open and bloodless lips, they all speak your natural, your virtuous horror of me. I have done a deed that puts me at an immeasurable distance from human sympathy; I am so far *out*, that even you who stand last and longest on the shore have ceased to see me in the distance.”

“Oh, cruel, cruel!” wept Cyprian, crawling after him on his knees. “Oh! if you could *but know*, and when you *do* know, as *shortly* you *must*—*I* not follow? *I* not hear you? Shew me the hand that did the murder and I will kiss it, if you will not drive me away; I will follow you in quiet misery, I will smile
on

on you as in our days of innocence, and only weep when you are at rest. I will wander with you, beg with you, famish with you.”—“ You draw every picture of misery ; you will wander, you will famish with me ! Am I so very lost ? is there no one bright speck or atom in futurity for me ? must we be thus wretched ? ”—“ Oh, no, no ! ” said Cyprian eagerly, “ there is a hope for penitence ; there are gracious and humble joys unknown to the proud that have never erred. Let us go hence to decent indigence and retirement, to some place remote from the din of folly, that is never necessary to happiness, and always unfavourable to virtue. I will go with you to the vallies of Switzerland or the mountains of Spain. Many a melancholy pleasure dawns upon me in our hermit haunt of penitence. Conference when you are cheerful, the sound of my harp when you are pensive, the consciousness of

safety when disposed to repine, and the remembrance of error when tempted to passion: these will be with us in our valley of sorrow, and who that has these can be dissatisfied?"—"Is it then possible for a murderer to know peace?"—"I will pray for your peace," said Cyprian tremblingly. "But is it possible that a murderer can have peace?" said Ippolito vehemently. "All things are possible with him whom we have to do with," answered Cyprian fervently. "May I, indeed, be forgiven?"—"If the penance to which I here devote every hour of my remaining life can procure you peace or pardon, you shall," said Cyprian, falling on his knees and kissing the crucifix that was on the tomb. "Keep your vow," said Ippolito in a fearful tone. "What is it you mean?"—"You have eased my soul of its burden, you have taught me there is pardon for a murderer. The deed is not *yet* done; but if it can be pardoned, why should

should it be delayed?"—"Oh! what words are those? Oh, plunge not your soul and mine in wilful, unresisted ruin! There can be no pardon for premeditated guilt; there is no mercy for the presumptuous offender who offends in the confidence of forgiveness, and converts the long suffering of heaven into the minister of sin."

Ippolito was gone. He had spoken peace to his conscience by the wild sophistry of despair, and drawn from the abused lips of purity an unintentional encouragement to guilt, and pacified by this wretched device, he rushed from the palace.

Of him whom he left behind, no more was heard, Cyprian was beheld no more. Affection had no more to contend with, nor had sorrow any further power of suffering. His existence was rendered vain by the frustration of the purpose to which it had been devoted, and for which alone it had been supported;

ported ; and he felt how dreadful it was to hope no more, to have in life no further worth or use, aggravated by the recollection that his had been voluntary choice : his, therefore, was merited suffering.

* * * * *

Annibal was conducted by Schemoli to the neighbourhood of Muralto ; he was led into a hut and supplied with refreshments, and pacified with the promise that he should be disturbed by no intruders. To all this he listened in silence, and Schemoli was preparing to leave him—"Whither are you going?" said Annibal. "I am now going to the castle, I shall return at night and bring your brother with me ; I will then lead you both to the *very apartment*."—"And am I to remain alone till night?"—"You must."—"Impossible ! I dare not trust myself ; do not *you* trust me. I shall be mad, incapable of doing the work

work that is fastened on me ; incapable of any thing, even of mischief. What ! to be six hours alone, with such thoughts as mine ! you are mad to propose it."

Schemoli appeared disconcerted ; at length he said, " If I bring you to the castle, you must consent to remain alone and silent till the hour arrives."—" Yes, I can remain alone and silent in the castle, for the sounds of life will be around me ; but lead me not to any apartment I have before been accustomed to ; let me see no place I have inhabited while my heart was light and innocent."

Schemoli led him to the castle unobserved ; such was its extent, and so many parts were ruinous and uninhabitable, that this, though it was only twilight, was no matter of difficulty. The apartment to which he was conducted he had never seen before, nor did he examine it now ; he paced up and down, listening for the sound of steps or voices,
of

of which he heard but few and distant. It was not impossible, that had he devoted even this interval to recollection, he might have recalled his direful resolution ; but it is the curse of a desperate state of mind to consider the exclusion of reflexion as a species of duty, and his resolution, therefore, continued unaltered because unexamined.

| Night approached ; through a pannel in the door he saw light twinkling ; he believed it was Schemoli approaching, and determined to meet him at the door, not *to be called and chidden to his task*. He therefore hastened to the door, without perceiving it was not the door by which he had entered. It gave way, and through it he saw a suite of apartments, in the last of which lights were burning. With an impulse for which he did not seek to account, he entered them ; all was still and deserted. He reached the last, and paused to examine the strange diversity of
of

of objects it contained. It was furnished even with modern elegance, but repelled approach by an oppressive smell of medicines. Silver branches sparkled on a table of marble, on which stood several phials; beside it was extended on a sofa a lady apparently asleep. Annibal advanced, and beheld *Erminia*, her very self, as he first beheld her in the picture of the secret apartments. The sylvan robe of green velvet, overspread with her long loose tresses, and clasped with diamonds, the veil of gold gauze falling over her face reached the ground. Her sleep was uneasy, she moaned often, and at length throwing aside her veil with a quick motion, which yet did not wake her, she discovered the face of *Ildefonsa*!

Her face presented the same strange and frightful contrast as the furniture of her apartment; the deep fixed colour that burned on her cheek was evidently artificial, while her wan and purple lips
seemed

seemed withering in the parched breath they exhaled; her bosom, decked with pearl and shaded with ringlets, was displayed with a meretricious excess, yet the cold drops that trembled on her forehead seemed forced out by the approaches of dissolution. All power of exclamation was denied to Annibal. He felt nothing but wonder, saw nothing but witchery; the presence of her he believed lost, her solitary pomp, the mixture of emblems of death and magnificence that surrounded her, had she slumbered till the day of judgment he could only have gazed on her. But after a few inarticulate murmurs of painful sleep, she started, and awoke and beheld him. Even then he could not speak; he knelt beside her, he grasped her hands, he gazed earnestly on her face. “I could not die till I saw you, my beloved,” said Ildefonsa. “Die!” repeated Annibal in a voice which cannot be described. Ildefonsa pointed to one
of

of the phials, and sunk back on the sofa, Annibal reached it to her silently; her face was convulsed, she swallowed it, and then another. "Will this," said she, "give me breath to tell you how I have been brought here, and what I have suffered?" Again her speech was impeded. "Oh, no, I cannot! all that remains of life is scarce enough to tell how I have loved—how, dying, I love you still! We were not doomed to be happy here, this earth has no good things for us; the storm has been with us, but its roar comes far and faintly now, and where I am hastening it shall not be heard any more for ever. Oh, my love! my gentle love! distract not my dying hour by this violence! rend not your hair, nor gnash your teeth thus! I was calm till you came; it is an hour in which I had rather think of you than behold you."

Again she was convulsed, and sunk backward. Annibal supported her with
that

that firmness of silent and terrible strength, which seems to the sufferer himself like the effect of a spell, and which he dare not breathe lest he dissolve. During the remainder of the night she was sometimes convulsed, sometimes quiet, but never articulate or lucid; in calm desperate agony he had to watch the slow expiration of sense, the long, severe strife of nature in extremity, grasping at relief fitfully, and again relaxing its grasp. He had to behold her die, without relief and without discovery of her murderer!

In her struggles he thought at times he heard her name his father. He continued to gaze on the corse till the clock struck twelve; the sound smote on his soul, he caught up the taper and rushed from the apartment: in his own he found Schemoli and Ippolito. The brothers communicated not, by word, by groan, by look. "It is the hour," said Schemoli;

moli; "all is still; I will dismiss the attendants." He departed; he was absent for an hour, during which not a word was uttered by his victims. They could not have heard each other; there was a storm, a storm which rocked the castle, and which they did not hear.

Schemoli returned; they did not see his altered expression till his motions compelled their notice. He dashed the lamp from his hand, he fell at their feet, he wound himself round their knees, pushed back their drawn swords, and then bared his own breast to them. Insensible to every thing but the terrible purpose of the hour, they scarce saw him at their feet. Still unable to speak, he gasped, he writhed, he howled, he pointed to the apartment to which he was about to conduct them, till believing they were abused by the mows and grimaces of a fiend, they broke from, and left him
extended

extended on the floor. His pointing hand instructed them too well, and his shadow seemed to flit before them to the very door of the apartment.

* * * * *

CHAP. XXII.

—Ere the bat hath flown

His cloister'd flight, ere to black Hecate's summons
The shard-born beetle with his drowsy hum
Hath rung night's yawning peal, there shall be done
A deed of dreadful note.

SHAKESPEARE'S "MACBETH."

My senses blaze—my last, I know, is come ;
My last of hours. 'Tis wond'rous horrid ! now—

LEE'S MITHRIDATES.

ON that night it was observed by the attendants that the Count was remarkably agitated. His confessor had been twice summoned to him. On his quitting

ting him for the last time, he desired the Countess to attend him, and when she came, the attendant, as usual, quitted the apartment. They were two hours in conference. His spirits were usually calmed by the stern energy of his wife, and by the influence she had acquired over him from the superior strength of her character; but on this night her influence failed, and after two hours vainly spent in the sophistry of guilt and palliations of misery, he remained gloomy and agitated. “Why do you walk up and down in the dark corners of the room, listening to the wind and looking on your shadow?” said the Countess. “Sit down by this ruddy fire, I have trimmed the tapers, and every thing is bright and cheerful.”—“Are they, indeed?” said the Count. “They are; come, sit on this seat beside me, and be calm.”—“No, no; when I am in the darkest corners of the room *I know the worst.*”
I can

I can look upon no part of the chamber that is not brighter than that I am in; but when I sit in the circle of the light, I dare not look beyond it; the shades are all in terrible motion beyond the very edge of the taper!"—"Why will you bend your mind to these sickly fancies?"—"They bend my mind to *them*."—"What is it that oppresses you to-night?"—"That which oppresses me every night."—"There is something unusual in your agitation to-night; your looks, your very language are altered."—"Are they, indeed? in truth, are they? Nay, 'tis no wonder; man's ordinary frame would sink under one hundredth part of what I daily or nightly undergo; yet my strength is unimpaired. Not a hair of my head is changed. My mind seems to have absorbed all power of suffering into itself, and *its* faculty of suffering, we *are told*, is immortal. I have much to harass and disturb me of pre-

sent and imminent fear. How do I know what danger that *fugitive* may be preparing for me in the remotest region of Italy? or his brother, who has hurried from Naples, no one knows whither?"—

“Do not suffer yourself to be dejected, the confessor will discover them be sure, and then we will have nothing further to fear.”

“Have I not perpetually before me a remembrancer, a living remembrancer, who combines the imagery of fancy and reality, who recalls at once the living and the dead. The roof of my castle seems to shake over me while she is beneath it.”

“And was it not your own fond fantasy to deck her up in that array? Like a child you run from a mask you have yourself painted; but whether real or fantastic, your fears may cease to-night: she has sunk into a sleep from which she will probably wake no more.”—“What have

have you done?"—"That which must be done, and which therefore they who do soonest do best. Would you be ruined by the babbling waywardness, the whining love of a girl?"—"I could not have destroyed her."—"Weak and inconsistent! what would you have? you tremble in danger and you pine in security. What would you have?"—"Ask me not what I would have, I would have what no power can do for me; I would have time turned backward, and deeds *undone*; I would have impossibilities; I would have peace, and ONE night of unbroken sleep!"—"That is impossible."—"I do not want to be told so. Secure! my security is like the fortress of a giant, moated round with blood; it is like the tower of the Persian tyrant, a pile of human skulls. I am become a wonder to myself. I could not (once) have borne to think what I now must bear to be. In the first stage of

my progress, I saw but a single act necessary to success. I revolted from its first view ; but habitual contemplation, and, above all, the facility of repenting, *one solitary act* of guilt bribed me to its perpetration. Had it been joined in the remotest bearing with another crime ; had but another link of the dark chain been shadowed in my mind's view, I had never been guilty. But it is the policy of Satan. I had scarce dipped in blood when I found I must swim in it. Another act but led to another ; to retain what I had acquired demanded more of the means that acquired it. I found myself tottering on a point which I deemed the central hold of success ; I tried to rise, and found myself tottering still. I look back now on a length of crimes that sear the sight, I look round and feel I totter still. I look upward, and see the point of safety remoter than ever, and that I have been lost, and
trebly

trebly lost for nothing ! Where will this end ?"—“ In safety and eminence at last,” said his dauntless wife ; “ in a height from which we shall look down on envy and danger alike, and feel no sacrifice too great to obtain.”—“ Safety !” said Montorio growing pale, “ how can you talk of safety and hear the yelling of the blast ? Hark, how it bursts, wild and horrible ! the casements will give way ; and now it sinks again, and wails away so faint and distant. Oh, that dolorous, sobbing, spent sound ! could it be the wind, Zenobia ? What if it were ?”—“ For shame ! will you run mad listening to the wind ? will you conjure the innocent elements into phantoms of fear ? Listen, it is gone already ; it whistles over the cottages beneath your castle, and does not wake a sleeper there : it is fallen now, the night will be calm.”—“ Do you think so, good wife ; do you indeed think so ? I pray you
look

look out at the casement, and tell me the shape and waftage of the clouds, and whether the wrack flies swift, and *where* the winds are chasing it.”—“Look abroad yourself, you are near the casement, and the flitting clouds will amuse you.”—“*Amuse me !* Oh, if you knew what forms are riding in the darkness when *I* venture to look out, aye, flitting across the casement with palpable motion, and when I start, beckoning from the ridgy clouds, but not like *them*, gliding away : if you saw this !”—“Are you the slave of such fantastic folly ? I would sooner tear mine eyes out than let them abuse my reason thus.”—“If my eyes were torn out I should see them still.”—“Oh ! these are the dreams of fearful solitude ; the very whispers of the place and season. I should run mad with apprehension if I shut myself up in a lone tower, and listened to the wailings of the wind.”—“Aye, ’tis the wind I shrink from.

Whenever

Whenever the storm howls round my castle I think of the night when—hark, hark, how loud it is now! Just such was the sound, and such was the season—” “You mistake, it was at the close of autumn.”—“I do not mistake; it is spring, and summer, and winter, and autumn with me; I hear it in every wind that blows.”

“Let us go then to Naples, I know not why we came to this house of horrors; let us go to Naples. I will go with you, and we will have feasting and jollity. In the tumult of festivity you will forget these thoughts that ride your fancy like the hags of vision; you shall go forth, and enjoy your state like a magnificent noble, and all shall be well.”—

“No, I cannot, it besets me THERE; and how can I trust myself amid a crowd, who dread to be discovered to my own lacqueys? My life is wasted in watching a secret. When I was last in Naples
they

they dragged me to some assembly. I saw it *there*; aye, you may gaze, but I saw it plainly as I see you now. As I crossed the portico it stood opposed to me for a full minute, and looked on *me*: looked! no, no, it had no eyes; but still it seemed as if it saw me, and I saw *it*.”—“Saw what?”—“Do you not know?”—“No, in truth, you have so many visions and fantasies.”—“Why, then, not to avoid its sight again could I utter the name.”

He sat down sullenly, and remained silent for some time, then starting up again listened to the wind. “Did you not tell me,” said he reproachfully, “that the storm had ceased?”—“I am not to blame if the elements will not be at peace.”—“And who is to blame,” said he, striding up and down gloomily, “that I am trembling here with every change of them? It is destiny’s, not mine. If I were a conqueror, a ravager of the earth now, I should lie
down

down in peace; if I were one who had slept after the carnage of thousands, whose bare word had swept off more in one day than all the petty villains of earth would stab darkling in their lives; if I were one who had flung infants and pregnant mothers in the fire, and rested every night lapt in the colours of victory, and stunned by the thunder of my drums; if it were thus, I would be at peace, I would be called a hero by the world, and lie down at last lulled by the acclamations of mankind. Oh, if it were thus! Yes, it is this cursed domestic sensibility of guilt that makes cowards of us; the deed that makes the hero damns the man. I am lost, because I am pent up in the walls of a castle, and mark myself with the sign of the cross; the magic chain of evil is the fear.”—“I have never seen you so wrought by fear and dismal thought as this night.”—“ ’Tis true; this night has a presage

with it, I cannot, cannot——” “Has the confessor been with you?”—“Twice.” “And has he given you no comfort, as he is wont to do?”—“Aye, marvellous comfort, solitary penance for an hour; and so good night, Zenobia. Zenobia, do you pray at night?”—“I do.”—“Indeed! and fervently, truly?”—“Aye; but I do not trust to prayer alone.”—“What do you mean?”—“Look here,” said the Countess, and withdrawing her vest shewed beneath an iron band that encircled her waist, and was closed under her breast by a spring whose point entered it. “Who devised this most horrible penance?” said her husband. “They who could execute it could alone devise it.”—“The infliction is most sharp and agonizing, but the consequences are worse. Remove that dreadful zone, Zenobia; the corrosion of the iron——” “Will produce a cancer, I know it.”—“And the consequence must then

then be—" "A terrible operation; I have sustained it already. Eight months I wore it on the other side, it terminated as you suggest. I submitted to the operation without discovery and without a groan, and when it was over I removed the sharp point to the other side."

Montorio smote his hands together. "What have we become? what have we made ourselves?"—"That which I would bear this, and tenfold this to be, great and powerful, one of the eminent on the earth. Let any curse be mine but that of high-born, high-thoughted beggary; the habits of a noble, the spirit of a sovereign, and the fortune of a mendicant. On my earliest view of life I saw but one thing that it was good to be; the price was high, and the conditions difficult; but since it is accomplished, I will not affront my pride by thinking I gave for it too much. I am the possessor of rank and magnificence; all that is seen of me

is,

is great and splendid. Let the world be deceived and I must be happy; yes, I *am* happy.”—“And will the other world also be deceived?”—“No; but it will be pacified, if our priests tell us true. They say St. Peter’s keys are of gold, I have one of IRON that cannot fail. If penance can avail, what can be so powerful as that I voluntarily do?”—“I know of but one mode more severe.”—“More severe! what is it?”—“*That* I must undergo to-night.”—“What! is it the scourge, or iron?”—“No.”—“Do you rend your flesh with sackcloth?”—“No.”—“What can it be?”—“An hour of solitude,” answered Montorio, turning on her with the visage of a fiend in woe.

The Countess was retiring. “Hold,” said he, “are you going, already going? am I alone? does he make me undergo this that I may think less of my final mansion? I cannot bear it, no, I cannot be alone, Zenobia; send the confessor

fessor to me, I will confess to him ; that expedient we adopted to pacify heaven, and avert the cause from our house. I have not confessed that yet, I have never told it ; perhaps it may move him to mitigate my penance.”—“ Perhaps it may, he shall attend you.”

She retired, and the confessor was again summoned. Their conference was long, and marked with singular emotions. In the progress of it, the Count avowed that secret with which he had fed an inward, doubtful hope of palliation for many years. The monk was sitting on the chair when (in the posture of the confessor) he received it ; he started, as if his soul was smote within him. In a voice, whose tones were convulsed with unknown emotions, whose tones were audible from the bare strength of their meaning, almost without aid of articulation, he demanded a repetition of the confession. His penitent, overpowered he knew not how, hesitated.

hesitated. The confessor repeated his demand in a voice not human ; the Count again faltered it out with mechanical fear. The confessor paused, as if to assure himself of what he heard ; the seat shook under him. The Count looked up in his face with amaze, his cowl had fallen over it, and in his agitation it remained untouched ; and his figure thus dark, silent, and shaking with unuttered thoughts, was more like the phantom of a terrible dream than the living and actual form of man. At length, spurning aside his chair, he rose and was rushing from the apartment. “ Father,” called the Count, “ you have not given me absolution.”—“ Nor ever will,” yelled the monk, “ nor ever shall myself seek or obtain it.” He was gone.

His penitent, long accustomed to starts of passion resembling insanity in the confessor, believed that he was only overcome by the discovery of a new link in that chain

chain of crimes which had for four years been gradually unfolded to his view, without a prospect of their dark termination. Believing, therefore, that the event of this conference would scarce have ended in the mitigation of his penance, he prepared to undergo it, mentally resolving, however, that if after the experience of some moments he found solitude what he feared, he would summon his attendants to the antichamber, and at least hear their steps, and see their lights through the crevices of the door while he performed his task. He had scarce time to explore the terrors of solitude.

The issue of those dark hauntings by which the brothers had been beset so long, may already be conjectured. The secret crime, so often suggested to them by visionary temptation, they now proceeded, under the influence of visionary terror, to perpetrate. The secret door through which the monk had rushed to deprecate it, in
vain,

vain, was still open; they advanced through the passage with feelings, which he who knows human feelings will hardly inquire or willingly hear. They entered the apartment of their victim; he was on his knees, in that agony of prayer which hears no sound but its own murmurs. They approached unseen; they dared not look at each other; but so intense and single was the impulse, that at the same moment their swords met in their father's body! He expired without a groan.

The noise of the body falling on the ground alarmed the attendants, whose habitual vigilance was easily aroused. They rushed in; there was no outcry of inquiry or conjecture, for the parricides stood, frozen and senseless, still grasping their red dripping weapons. The body was raised and examined, but when they discovered it was stone dead, their faculties were restored, a wild burst of inarticulate horror rung through the

4

apartment,

apartment, and every one applied himself to a different purpose with the precipitation of sudden, momentous discovery. The murderers were secured, unresisting and unconscious; every tower in the castle blazed with lights, and resounded with hurrying feet; the alarum bell rung out, quick, and loud, and terrible; the sound was heard at Naples the live-long night, wafted by the howlings of the storm. The family, whose inquiries were only answered by ghastly silence, rushed to the Count's apartment. The daughters threw themselves in agony upon the body, the sons demanded the means and circumstances of the murder. The Countess stood beside the couch to which the corse had been removed, and covered her face with her robe.

At this moment of distracted questions and incoherent answers, a number of the officials of justice arriving from Naples, entered the castle, and without disclosing the

the cause of their appearance, required that the criminals should be delivered into their custody. This was performed. The family had often turned, in the midst of their lamentations, with looks of appealing agony to the brothers; but their voices were drowned in a fresh burst of woe, and they could not ask what probably had been asked in vain. The attendants, however, whose grief began to yield to wonder, interrogated the criminals repeatedly, on the motive and object of the dreadful deed they had done. They obtained no answer; the unhappy young men were once heard to ask for a little water, but from their fixed and blood-shot eyes, their staring hairs, and mute ghastliness, it was rightly conjectured that of what was passing around them they heard or noticed nothing.

In about an hour something like order was restored, and the criminals, of whose guilt so obvious there was scarce an
official

official inquiry, were about to be removed, when the confessor rushed into the room. The attendants, who had beheld with calmness the terrible spectacle of a violent death, faltered and shrunk at the sight of him: there was nothing human to which he might be compared, nor any thing beyond or below it that could be imagined like him. He flew with the speed of a demon to mischief; he paused as if he saw the desolation of the world. He gazed for a moment around him, and then approaching the officers, demanded that he should be secured by them as the real agent of the crime of which they were appointed to take cognizance. The supernatural wildness of his aspect, contrasted with the calmness of his address, stupified the officers. They listened to be assured that the sounds they heard proceeded from the object before them. He repeated them in a voice that chilled them; but while tremblingly they secured him,

him, they almost expected to see the fetters with which they bound him disappear, or his whole form dissolve into vacancy. His demand, however, was incontrovertible ; no one had accused, no one even had mentioned him ; his surrender was voluntary, and no one inquired its reason.

The family now separated with the dumb solemnity that attends events too great for complaint. A few attendants renewing the half-extinguished lights, prepared to watch by the body of their Lord, over which was extended a black pall ; and the carriages in which the officials had travelled, conveyed them and their prisoners away about daylight.

The crime of the night, in all its circumstances, was so new and horrible, that even the ministers of justice, grown old in the history of human depravity, felt amazed and outraged by the event. Their attention was fixed strongly on the
prisoners,

prisoners, as hunters would gaze on the motions of a monster, such as their search had never before discovered. The brothers were totally silent, and on their arrival at Naples, were found to be plunged in a sleep so deep and heavy, that they were lifted out of the carriage by the attendants (who shuddered to touch them) without awaking. Schemoli kept his head enveloped in his cowl, through which his heart-drawn groans were every moment audible. On alighting from the carriage his face was involuntarily uncovered, and his eyes for a moment fell on the young men; and for that moment the expression of his visage was such, that the attendants scarce thought themselves safe till it was concealed again. In consideration of their rank they were allotted apartments in the castle of St. Elmo, where Schemoli immediately demanded implements for writing, a small portion of bread and water,
and

and undisturbed solitude for thirty-six hours.

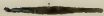
To this the officials, after examining the apartment, and removing from it every implement of mischief, consented. He also demanded that no judicial steps should be taken against the prisoners, till a document which he was preparing was ready to be submitted to the principal justiciary of Naples. With regard to this, he was informed that of a case so mysterious and extraordinary, no cognizance would probably be taken till a much more remote period, as the process of inquiry and examination which would be instituted could not be too minute or deliberate. In consequence, however, of the intimations of the prisoner Schemoli, on the third night after his arrival at the castle of St. Elmo the grand justiciaries of Naples, with some of its most distinguished public characters, at mid-

6

night

night assembled in a subterranean apartment of the castle. A double guard was planted on every avenue of the building, and the secretary advancing to the foot of a table which was covered with black, while an assistant on each side held a torch, produced and read before the assembly a manuscript given him a few hours before by the monk Schemoli, which he had written in his prison.

CHAP. XXIII.



“LET those who blame the extravagance of my passions, think I was a lover; let those who mock my abused credulity, reflect I was a jealous lover; let those who execrate the horrors of my revenge, remember I was an Italian.

“I am Orazio, Count of Montorio, so long believed dead, and who rises from imaginary death only to bewail that *it is* not real. I am Orazio, Count of Montorio; this is no device of imposture; I have living witnesses and incontestible proofs. I have witnesses that *can* prove my identity,

tity, and a tale that *must*—I desire not to anticipate my narrative by a display of my character, it will be sufficiently unfolded by its progress, nor would I conceal its most dark and inward foldings from the eye. I have other purpose than my own vindication in this narrative.

“ Of a large family, my brother, the late Count, and I, alone arrived at the age of manhood.

“ My heart had originally a capacity of affection beyond most human hearts. I loved him with a love ‘ passing that of women;’ I was alternately to him a father and a child, an almoner and a monitor. My purse he might have exhausted, my name he might have disgraced; but my *heart*——.

“ He was weak and vicious; I knew it well. It was the curse of my character to love, not for the perception or sake of worth in the object, but to gratify the wild exuberance of my own feelings.

My heart was like a mine, that poured out its irrepressible pregnancy of wealth at the feet of surrounding *peasants*, which enriched the worthless and exalted the base, whose unhappy fertility was without discrimination and without gratitude.

“ I had procured my brother a military commission of high rank, which his irregularities soon compelled him to resign: still I defended and upheld him, and gave to his retreat an air of angry dignity instead of disgrace. I was revolving some other plan for his advancement, and in order to pursue it had removed to Naples, where I saw her whose name I cannot, on the verge of death, write with a firm hand, Erminia di Amaldi. I loved, as few men had ever loved, without knowledge of the passion, without knowledge of the sex. Of love or of marriage I had never even thought before; and now, as usual, my first thought

thought was resolution. I addressed her without any gentleness of approach, any arts of insinuation. I persecuted her without any gradation of advance, any intervals of deliberation. If she had even loved me, I left her no time for its avowal, almost for its consciousness. I poured out my passion before her with a violence that affrighted her, and when she was terrified into silence, I mistook it for assent. Her gentle reluctance, her timid distress, her silent dismay, nay, her tears and anguish, I heeded as much as the hunter pursuing his prey would heed the lily that he crushes in his speed.

“ My impetuosity, my rank, my wealth, my munificence bore down all obstruction. I led, I dragged Erminia to the altar, where amid the solemnity, she fainted in my arms. After some time I brought her to my castle, surrounded her with every thing that woman could desire, or man procure, and courted her

to be happy with magnificence and affection.

“ At this period my brother married, married without my consent, without my knowledge, a woman whose family had been the long-tried and inveterate enemy of mine; married without the means of procuring his wife another meal, except from the compassion of that family, by whom before I would be assisted, I would famish a thousand times. With sore constraint I assumed severity, and refused for some time to see or admit him.

“ During this period I found other employment than thinking of *him*. I discovered, or imagined I had discovered, my wife did not love me. I feel *now* that I must have thought the same of any other woman. I had imagined that passion was a something which human performance could never realize. With the purity of a matron, and the delicacy
of

of a woman, I yet expected the blandishments of a harlot, and the ardours of a man.

“To be what I demanded would probably have disgusted me, to be less, distracted me; I loved too well to be happy. Yet Erminia might have had more compassion, or might have dissembled more. Hours have I knelt at her feet, and have only been suffered to rise with a sigh. Hours have I held her to my heart, and felt only her cold tears trickling on my bosom. Hours have I supplicated for a smile, and been dismissed with one whose gleam played over her pale face, like moonshine upon a plain of snow, cold and uncherishing. While she was pregnant, I tried to believe that indisposition might suspend her fondness, and when she became a mother, that her children might divide it. With the vigilance of jealousy, which dreads itself, though in her presence I heaped
her

her with tender reproach and expostulation, yet when absent, I studied, I invented devices to prevent my belief warping that way, while I tried to convince her what I dared not to think myself. Yes, Erminia might have had more compassion, or might have dissembled better.

During this interval, having made my brother for some time experience the privation of his customary indulgences, I procured for him a distinguished situation, of which he concealed from me that he had anticipated the profits by debt, even before he had expected the possession of it. I had long been personally reconciled to him, and in the third year of my marriage he came to pass some time at the Castle of Muralto.

(Here I dropt my pen, and my taper seemed to go out—it must be resumed—Erminia! Erminia! Are these tears? Often have I poured out blood to

to

to thy memory, never till this hour a tear !)

“ My brother easily discovered the state of my mind ; a fool might have discovered it ; concealment never was one of my habits. My mind was as open as the ocean, and as soon agitated by storms. I know not how his approaches were first made, with what poison his first invisible arrow was tinged, or rather with what depth of poison, for from the first it was the green, livid venom of jealousy he infused, from that shade which scarce produces an infected spot in the mind’s eye, to that deep dye which darkens the sun, and overshadows the soul with glooms unlit and impassable. I think we were sitting one day after Erminia had quitted us ; I observed her dejection in terms as cold as I could, merely to find if others thought of it as I did. ‘ When dejection,’ said he, ‘ arises from a local cause, it is easily
re-

removed.’—‘True,’ said I, without applying the remark. ‘There was a report,’ he continued, ‘that Almoni’s regiment is ordered to embark for Spain, perhaps that occasions her dejection.’—

‘I never heard she had any relations in Almoni’s regiment.’—‘I never heard she had.’—‘Why then should its removal effect her?’—‘What! have you never heard of——?’—‘What is it you mean?’—‘Nothing, nothing in the world; a mistake, it must be all a mistake; let us send for the children; they are remarkably like you.’—‘I think the elder is like me.’—‘They are both like you,’ said he vehemently, ‘by my soul they are, let people talk as they will.’

‘The children came; I walked about, busied in a strife of thought; he observed it. ‘Why do you not speak to the children,’ said he. ‘I had rather at this moment speak with you.’ He came

came to the window against which I leaned my back that he might not observe the changes I felt my features undergoing. ‘Why should the Countess be disconcerted at the removal of the regiment of that—I know not his name?’—‘I, I, do not know.’—‘You *do* know.’—‘I only know what every one knows; why should *I* be interrogated?’—‘What every one knows?’—‘Yes; every one knows that the Chevalier Verdoni has a company in that regiment.’—‘And of what consequence is that to *me*, to the Countess I mean?’—‘What! have you never heard of Verdoni?’—‘Never.’—‘That is strange; never seen him at the Amaldi palace?’—‘Never, I say. Oh! that there were no such things as questions and interjections upon this earth.’—‘I would there were no such things as questions at this moment. But now I recollect, it is *not* strange you never saw him at the Amaldi

palace; he must have been dismissed.'

—'Dismissed at my approach?'—

'Certainly, a rejected suitor; and every one commended the Countess's prudence.

Women have a privilege of change in their *latest* period of courtship, and a woman of so much prudence must make a better wife. To keep such reports from you so long, she must have a great store indeed, and kindness too, for it is kind to prevent superfluous pain.'

—'If you think so, why do you not finish your tale?'—'I finish it! I know nothing more. Would you have me repeat all the ribald talk of Naples, of my brother's wife too? If you have curiosity, or if you have patience, my servant, Ascanio, who lived lately with Verdoni, can tell you what he heard. But let me intreat if you have not patience, do not call him.'

He named a red-haired, ill-looking man, who attended him. I had a deep,
untold

untold aversion to that man ; I started at his name. I said involuntarily, ‘ I shall not like to listen to what Ascanio will tell me.’—‘ Very possibly you will not,’ observed my brother, inwardly. ‘ Come, shall we go to the Countess’s apartment, I think I hear her harp ?’—‘ Yes,’ said I, almost unconsciously, ‘ let us go to—to my—to the Countess.’—‘ I never heard you,’ said he, carelessly, ‘ call her the Countess so often as this evening ; you used to say Erminia.’—‘ *And she is Erminia,*’ said I, distracted by this hint, ‘ *she is, she must be my Erminia.*’ I quitted the room ; I thought I heard my brother laugh as we quitted it.

“ Erminia was sitting at her harp, her children were at her feet, peeping at each other through the strings, as she sung to them. I tried to listen, but every tone of voice or harp murmured ‘ Verdoni.’ I beckoned to my brother and we quitted the apartment.

‘ Send

‘Send for your servant,’ said I, when we were alone. ‘For what?’ ‘I shall tell *him* when he comes.’ ‘You must tell me before he is sent for.’—‘Must?’—‘Yes; and moreover, you must promise when he comes, to listen to him calmly.’—‘By mentioning that condition, it is plain you know for what purpose I would send for him.’—‘And by seeming to decline that condition it is plain you expect he will disclose something it is not safe for you to hear.’—‘I shall begin to expect it, if you do not call him immediately.’—‘That apprehension alone makes me submit.’—(Precious devil!)—‘I trust he will disclose nothing so bad as you expect.’—‘Oh! go for him, go for him,’ said I, writhing with impatience, ‘while you talk I am mad.’ He went; Ascanio was not to be found. This was a master-stroke. I was left a whole night to *think*; both of them pouring their

their suggestions into every avenue of my heart, for the same number of hours, could not have effected so much as solitude and the workings of my own thought effected. In the morning Ascanio was again summoned. I locked the apartment on him, my brother, and myself. I will not detail his serpent-windings, or his worse than serpent-sting. He affected that perplexity which endeavours to conceal a secret, whenever I questioned him, and that terror which is conscious of guilt; when I grew impatient, he affected a concern for the disclosures he reluctantly made; he affected to be a character, of all others the most imposing—the honest, indignant, involuntary confident of vice. The sum of his tale was, that Verdoni had long been attached to the Countess; that in consequence of his attachment, he was indulged with an intimacy, which he had abused; that it was known they
had

had a child, though how it was disposed of was not known; that he had been banished from the family, whose indiscretion had published their misfortune; that their lawless passion still continued, and was still gratified; and the Countess's dejection arose more from the interruption, than the disappointment of her guilty love.

I listened to this, all told with the wildest breaks of fear and remorse; I listened with that distraction which does not lose a syllable. Expletive, and letter, and look, and nod, was written on my heart with a pen of iron. The characters are uneffaced, I could read them to this hour; but to this hour its own evil is sufficient. Ascanio was dismissed, and my brother sat silent, with the aspect of one who has reluctantly betrayed a secret; at length he murmured something about inquiry and deliberation. 'I *am* deliberating,' said I,
scarce

scarce hearing myself. ‘Ogni Santi!’ said he, ‘What are you doing?’—‘I believe—am I not mending a pen?—mending a pen!—mangling your flesh; it is your finger you are cutting,’ said he, snatching the knife from me. I saw my fingers flowing with blood, I looked on them and laughed.

* * * * *

“I cannot, I will not follow the gradations of my ruin, I will not throw aside the covering under which my mental wounds have festered so long, to count their number, or probe their depth, or thaw by frequent touch the poison that has almost congealed in them, the blood that has ceased to flow. I was desired to observe my wife more closely; for I was told, that at night, when she believed I slept, she indulged a luxury of sorrow and passion, in which she was even heard to call on the name of her paramour. I needed no suggestions to
bid

bid me *wake*. But on the night after I received the intimation, I counterfeited sleep as soon as I lay down.

“In a short time she began to sigh heavily; it was a sultry summer-night, and she was far advanced in her pregnancy. I ascribed her depression to an obvious cause, and with the natural inconsistency of him who watches to discover what he would die to prove false, I wished that some heavy spell would steep me in drowsiness, before I discovered her sighs had another source. In a short time she arose, and wrapping a loose robe around her, took one of the tapers that burned in a veiled nich, and walked to a cabinet, of which I had often observed her care to be excessive. Through my half-closed lids I watched her every motion. She placed the taper on a marble desk, which sometimes she used as an oratory, and on which stood a crucifix. She opened the cabinet, and
after

after examining some papers, she took out a parcel which she laid before her, and began to read. My heart throbbed audibly ; as she bent over the paper, I thought a tear fell on it. ‘ Would she,’ said I, mentally, ‘ weep over the guilty passion of her paramour, under the very crucifix to which I have seen her prostrate herself an hour ago ?’

She put up the papers, and turning from the desk, leaned on the cabinet. The moon shone bright, and the lattice, woven with jessamine and tuberoses, was open, she turned towards it ; Mother of God ! how lovely she looked ! The taper tinged the summits of her feathery and burnished hair, with a radiance resembling that which hovers round the head of a saint. The moonlight fell on her pale face, disclosing just in the centre of her cheek a flushing spot, such as no adoration from me had ever kindled ; her loose robe half disclosed
a shape,

a shape, of all others, the most interesting to a husband. She murmured a few broken notes of an air I had often heard her lull her infants to rest with. Every sense might have been feasted by the picture before me; but along with the odour of the jasmine, came the perfume of those fatal letters.

I noted this well. I remembered that lovers, in voluptuous gallantry, often perfumed their letters. As I gazed on her, a tear glittered in the moonshine, it was followed by another, and another, and the last was accompanied by the murmured name of 'Verdoni.' I groaned audibly; she started; she replaced the the letters and the taper, and approached the bed. 'Are you awake, my Lord?'—'I fear I am *almost awake!*'—'You fear!'—'Oh! yes, it was so sweet to dream *as I have done!*'—'Were your dreams so pleasant? I thought I heard you groan.'—'I groaned

groaned when I found you had *left* me. — ‘Left you!’ — ‘Yes, even in sleep I felt it; sleeping or waking I think only of you; (she was standing beside the bed; I knelt up in it; I grasped both her hands;) my senses, my soul, are full of you! Erminia, I adore you so, with such nice and exquisite fondness, as you can never imagine! You can never love as I do! But, though you must ever be comparatively deficient, beware, I adjure you, of being positively so; a dereliction of thought, an imagined desertion would drive me mad.’ I was pouring out my whole heart with all its habitual impetuosity, at the very moment I had proposed to myself vigilance and caution.

I was still holding her hands, she sunk into a chair, beside the bed, but without withdrawing them, I sprung from the bed, and knelt at her feet. Her head was declined with the pale, pensive lily bending,

bending, that always melted me to sorrow and love. I continued to gaze on her without speaking, my voice was lost. 'Hear me, my Lord.'—'Hear *me*, my Lady, and my love, and life! I throw myself on your mercy, I implore your compassion for you and for myself. Do you remember the antique gem I gave you the other day? You admired the *workmanship* much, too much, more than the *gift* I fear. But I am wandering:—You remember the device, Cupid drawn by a lion, who paces quietly in his silken harness; think of me thus, dear, blessed love! Use me thus. While I am led by love, its caged emblems will not be so tender or so tame, but set free from that, I am a lion indeed, a lion who will—oh! Erminia, save me from imagining what.'

I dashed myself at her feet; I wept, I raved; my violence produced its usual effects, she was terrified and fainted. Her attendants were summoned.

moned. As I bent over her, extended in the likeness of death, I breathed an inward vow to banish for ever from my mind the subject of our conference, of which I already felt the misery insupportable, though the truth was not yet ascertained. I determined to sit down with the sufferings I could not now recal, and content with what happiness I might yet believe within my reach.

When they demanded of me the next morning what had been the event of my observations, I started as if I heard a serpent hiss. I prohibited all future mention of the subject; they quitted the apartment in silence; but Ascanio, as he was going out dropt a small key. I did not dare to think what this might mean. My first impulse was to seize it and try it where I suspected it was to be applied. I collected myself, and again called Ascanio. ‘ You have dropt a key.’ He sprung forward to seize it with

with the aspect of one who curses his own carelessness.

Here I might have rested, and suffered him to depart with the shame of defeated villainy, but my curiosity, my—the devil within me was roused—‘Does that key guard a treasure, that you snatch it with such eagerness?’—‘I do not know, my Lord.’—‘You do not know what your own key secures?’—‘My Lord, the key is not mine.’—‘Not yours, whose is it then?’—‘It belonged to my late master, the *Chevalier Verdoni*. He made no use of it himself, he kept it as a relic, he said, it was a key belonging to a cabinet he had presented to a lady he loved.’

“ I drove him from the room. In the confusion of his fear, he again dropt the key! I seized it; I flew to Erminia’s room; she was in the gardens of the castle with her children and attendants. I locked the door; to have seen my feverish tremblings, any one would have
 7 believed

believed I was hastening to some feast of solitary delight, and at that moment, I would have changed situations with him that was writhing on the rack. One hope remained; that the key was not designed for that cabinet; I tried it. Alas, it was only the trembling of my hands that made it seem to resist; it opened. A mist overspread my sight, a gentle knock at the door aroused me; it was my eldest boy.—‘You cannot come in, my darling.’—‘Why, father?’—‘Because I am busy.’—‘I know from the sound of your voice you are not praying, father, and why may I not come in.’—I could not answer.—‘Tell me what are you doing.’—‘I do not know what I am doing,’ said I in agony. ‘Whatever it be, throw it away, if it prevents you from coming to the garden, and playing with us.’ He tripped lightly away. I heard every word; the responses of an oracle had not sunk so deep into my soul—‘throw it away!’

The

The fatal papers were yet unopened. As I turned them with a shaking hand they fell, I stooped to replace them, and when my eye glanced on the first line, I could not withdraw it till I had read to the last.

“ When I had done, sense and memory forsook me. I know not where my spirit went for some time, but though it seemed the very haunt of final woe, it was paradise to its return to consciousness. All was mist and cloud for some time, such as the soul struggles through, breathless and fancy-bound, in some hagg-ridden dream. I saw the walls of the apartment, but I knew not where I was ; I heard bells, and steps, and voices, but I knew not where I was ; I heard the voice of the Countess in the gallery, and then I knew where and what I was.

“ My despair was not easily concealed, even my domestics, I believe, observed it. In a short time, however, I became

invisible to all but my brother and his servant : them only I admitted, yet them I could not bear to behold.

“ I am convinced I felt at the sight of that devil Ascanio, what a sorcerer feels in the presence of an imp whose ministry he employs, but by whom he knows he will be finally plunged in woe : his intelligence and his observation seemed necessary to existence, while they consumed it. I lived on poison. I was like the criminal travelling in the livid shade of the Upas, who must feed to live, and if he feeds must die. I had no feelings for this man but hatred and malevolence. I never saw him but my throat swelled, and my eyes seemed scalding in their sockets ; yet I fastened on him for my morbid food, and devoured it with the greediness with which one would swallow the promises of hope and fortune.

“ I mentioned to my brother the confessions of the guilty letters. I was asto-

nished to perceive that he listened to the disclosure like one whose feelings were preoccupied by some darker discovery. I remarked it with that quickness which met half way all the devices employed against me. He shook his head; I urged my suspicions with vehemence. ‘If,’ said he, ‘I could have any security that you would be patient, though after what I have seen of you I have no reason to accuse your want of patience.’ I urged him frantically to proceed. ‘What I have formerly disclosed,’ said he, ‘was accidentally and reluctantly; but I now speak from conscience and a sense of duty. Whatever errors a woman is guilty of before marriage, it is to be hoped the generous affection of a husband will lead her to shame and repentance of; but when she persists in her deviations after, she ceases to be an object of compassion or pardon.’ He stopped; I waved my hand to him to proceed,

proceed, I had no voice. ‘I have already said every thing,’ said he. Again I motioned to him to go on, though I could no longer distinguish sounds. ‘I have no more to say,’ said he after a long pause. ‘And I have no more to think,’ said I. ‘Have you then resolved on any thing?’—‘Yes, I have, if I could tell it; but I have no words, they have all left me.’—‘I know your purposes.’—‘No, by my soul you do not; you are thinking of blood and horror, I take no thought of them. For *him*, for *him*, were I the master of the sulphurous lake, I would give up all minor tasks to minor imps, to watch him tossing and weltering on its waves for ever and ever. For her, who has no name, let her live in what peace she may, *my* blood and that of her paramour shall be on her head; but I could not shed a drop of *hers*, not if I might be lapped in a dream of love again for it.’

—‘ And will you then suffer her to escape?’—‘ When she is delivered of the child, which I believe is mine, she shall be removed to a convent, and may the saints visit her retreat with penitence! for then will be done things that shall be a tale for ages—no, not one of those who have wrought me to this destruction shall escape!!!’ As I uttered the last words, I thought I saw him grow pale. My mind was full of dark thoughts; I seized his arm, I looked eagerly in his face: ‘ Swear,’ said I, ‘ that what you have told me is true.’ He kissed a missal that lay on the table. I saw, I heard him.

“ ‘ Now swear that you have perjured yourself.’—‘ Are you mad?’—‘ I am, I will be in a moment unless you do; I cannot bear it.’ I know not what followed; I was for some hours in a state from which alone I have since derived pauses of relief. When I recovered, I felt I had a human heart no longer; the
images

images of affection, and wife, and child, seemed to strike on my heart with palpable impulse, and find no entrance there; there was no longer admission or inmate there, the lamp was gone out, and the door shut for ever. The first sensation I was conscious of was an unquenchable thirst. I swallowed draught after draught, and thirsted still; it was mental and inward; nothing could slake it but a thought which, while it relieved for a moment, made it more fierce and stinging: it was the blood of Verdoni in a vase before me. My brother, sometimes deprecating my violence, and sometimes bewailing his task, at length informed me that the guilty intercourse of Erminia and Verdoni still continued, unchecked by fear, or by the suspicions which my altered demeanour might have suggested to them.

“ I know not how I answered him. I permitted him to arrange every thing for
their

their detection and punishment. I was in his hands as passive as a tool, but I never relaxed my demand of being suffered to dispatch Verdoni alone.

“ My brother announced that I was about making a tour to the Grecian islands. - I was accompanied by some attendants as far as the shore, there I dismissed them, and hiring under an assumed name a small villa in the neighbourhood of Baiæ, awaited the intelligence my brother engaged to send me. *That* came too soon. Ascanio brought me volumes of intercepted letters, referring to interviews and indulgences stolen in my absence. Their frequent meetings, their visits to their child, their remarks on its increasing growth and beauty, every doubtful term in the letters of the cabinet repeated and confirmed, occurred in these intercepted scrolls. When perused, their effect on me was usually a paroxysm so dreadful, that the people of
the

the house were scarcely pacified by the assurances they received of my periodical insanity : these paroxysms were followed by hours of solitude and abstraction, during which I could tolerate the presence of no one, and none dared to approach me. It was during these moments that strange thoughts were with me. My spirits fell like a subsiding tide, and like a falling tide carried away with them the dregs and wreck of its spent fury. I had relinquished every circumstance and pretension of rank and eminence. I had become a private man in habit and exterior ; all the vanity of the earth was become tasteless and loathsome to me, I sickened at their hollowness, I spurned their incapacity to suspend or alleviate calamity. I execrated the celebrity that made their possessor's fall only more conspicuous, his misfortunes a more popular theme of vulgar curiosity, his degradation a more ample feast for the vultures of envy. I
felt

felt that to return to what I had been was impossible; that my outward man must partake of the change of my inward man; that I could no longer support the Count Montorio's name, when I no longer possessed the Count Montorio's mind. I cannot describe the process or the effect of this change so great and effectual, though I experience its consequences to this hour.

I was a bold, ambitious, vain man, proud of my rank, and fond of its pompous appendages: what I became suddenly and finally, my narrative will tell. I have compared my progress to that of a magnificent caravan, overwhelmed and blasted in the majesty of its march by the burning deluge of the desert, and fixed a monument of desolation where it had moved a monument of pride. The result of my meditations was anticipated by a letter from Muralto, where my brother still resided as a spy on the culprits. He told me that their
passion

passion raged with such shameless violence, that Verdoni was frequently introduced at the castle, and that he had even fixed on a night to spend there, which the Countess had confessed, and implored *him* to conceal, believing from the frequency of her lover's visits that it was no longer possible to dissemble their object. When I read this—

I need not go on, nor will I enumerate every link of the chain that they wound round me with the art of demons, every one of burning iron, that scorched without consuming. I *will* mention, however, one circumstance, which is but too strongly indicative of my character, of that part of it which is derived from hereditary propensity. I think I can recollect the impressions they intended to produce were unsettled till they introduced a wretch, a mendicant, an astrologer, who talked something about prediction, and horoscopes, and ascendants, and a trinal

aspect on some hour on the appointed evening. He was a meagre, illiterate wretch ; I would have spurned my lacquey for listening to him ; *yet I* listened to him. I was like a sufferer bit by the tarantula, though my veins were filled with poison, they bounded and vibrated to his muttering jargon.

“ The night arrived. If any being could be supposed enveloped in lightning without being consumed, and then dismissed without losing the faculties and functions of life, such I believe would he describe the moment of his existence in the fiery fluid to be, as I remember the events of that night, thus sudden, thus hot, thus blasting ; gone almost when felt, without a possibility of defining or forgetting ; the time of its agency a moment, of its effects, for ever.

At the close of that evening I quitted my habitation, and met my brother in a forest that skirted the Campagna, about
two

two miles from Muralto, whose towers I could yet see through the dusk. He did not speak, and I believed all he had told me was true. We rode into a thicket, where we alighted and secured our horses. In a few moments I heard the trampling of hoofs. A cavalier passed alone, his deportment was melancholy and his pace slow. He passed us, my brother made a signal that we should again mount our horses; we did so. At some distance I saw him enter a cottage in the forest, I saw him at the door caressing a child, whom he placed before him, and disappeared in the windings of the wood. ‘Adulterous villain!’ said my brother. *I did not speak*, all was mist and darkness with me. I followed my brother’s motions mechanically. We entered the cottage, there was only a woman within. I leaned against the door, I could not breathe the air he had poisoned. My brother passed before me to prevent her
being

being alarmed at my appearance, it was probably most terrific. ‘Who is the cavalier that has just quitted your cottage?’—‘May I ask who inquires, Signor?’—‘We are friends, and have important business with him; if we are right in our conjectures of his name—’ ‘Why, Signor, he calls himself Orsanio,’ said the woman, proud of her sagacity; ‘but I myself have heard his attendants address him by the name of Verdoni.’—‘He visits your cottage frequently?’—‘Oh, frequently, Signor! He has a beautiful babe here, whom he cannot live a day without seeing.’—‘And is he always unaccompanied?’—‘Oh, no, Signor! he is often met here by a lady in a veil, and they converse and weep over the child till they make me weep too, though I know not for what.’—‘Do you know from whence the lady comes?’—‘She leaves her carriage at the skirts of the wood, Signor; but I have heard it
said

said that she is seen to return to the castle of Muralto, whose towers you can just see through the twilight. There are strange things told of the possessors of that great castle. Hark, Signor! could that groan have been uttered by the cavalier who leans there?'—'No, no; proceed, proceed.'

All this I heard, but after the last sentence I heard nothing. We quitted the cottage, we mounted our horses. 'What do you purpose to do?' said my brother. I could make no answer, but showing my drawn stiletto, and pointing towards the castle. We rushed into the wood; I did not see we were joined by Ascanio, till he pointed out Verdoni at a little distance before us. I sprung forward, he attempted to defend himself; and believing us from our masks and arms to be assassins, implored us to save his child. I dashed the bastard to the ground. He drew, but by this time the others had come up, and
Ascanio

Ascanio with a blow lopped off the hand that held the sword. Possibly he saved my life, for I was so blind and impotent with fury he might have overcome me with a reed. But I had no wish to mangle or butcher, I would not touch a hair of his head. I seized the reins of his horse, and we galloped towards the castle. They asked what I purported, but I could only utter ' my wife.'

There are many private avenues which, winding beneath the ramparts, open on the wood ; they were unknown except to me, for none but an enthusiast in antiquity would explore them. They followed me, therefore, as they would a magician, who discloses a path among subterranean rocks. I remembered their windings well, and remembered that one of them terminated in a dark and secret stair that communicated with the apartments of my wife. We traversed those caverns with no light but what broke through
chasu

chasm or crevice above, with no sound but the inarticulate moans of the devoted Verdoni.

I will not interrupt this narrative with attempts to describe what men call their feelings; for such as mine there can be but little sympathy, for there is no knowledge. Few have been in my circumstances, none that ever I knew have had my mind. It is easy to tell of the fall of ambition and the loss of felicity; but who has dared to describe the state of Lucifer, the ‘son of the morning,’ when he fell from the sphere of a seraph and the harmonies of heaven into darkness and woe, into beds of fire and fetters of adamant. Such was mine, total, remediless, final: worse, none but a mortal can know the *hell of love*.

“ I left our victim at the foot of the staircase with my brother; I ascended to the Countess’s apartment. I traversed one in which the children were sleeping: I could not look at them. Their mother
was

was in her bedchamber; her nurse was her only attendant. She screamed when she saw me; I attempted some insulting words, but my voice was choaked. I believe in a moment she comprehended the whole of her danger: she must, for my visage was the visage of a demon, and though I had not the power of language, my voice was like the roar of ocean. ‘Oh, I am betrayed and undone!’ said she, staggering back and falling on the bed. Then I found words. Words! Firebrands, and arrows, and death, I hurled at her in my rage of malediction. The woman interposed, affrighted interposed. I spurned her away. Darkly I menaced something that seemed to sting her to apprehension. She sprung from the bed, she clung to my feet, she wept, she grovelled, she adjured me but to hear her—to hear her—‘*let me but be heard!*’ I saw, I felt, I feasted on the anguish of her soul; every arrow she had sent into
my

my heart was returned to hers barbed with poison. ‘I am innocent, by this light!’—‘Adulteress!’—‘By this blessed cross I kiss—’ ‘Adulteress! adulteress!’ I roared. ‘Hear me but for a moment, but for one moment; confront me with your brother. Oh, Verdoni! we are destroyed by treachery.’

I tried to force myself from her, she clung to me still. I dragged her along the ground; her shrieks were wild, her grasp was like the grasp of death. ‘Oh, but for a moment hear me! Is that so much? As you expect to be heard yourself when you are stretched on the bed of death!’ Suddenly I stopt. I fixed my dry and bursting eyes on her; I felt the unnatural and hushed stillness of my voice. ‘I will not be heard myself in the hour of death; I have no hope, you have ’reft me of it, you have undone me for ever. The horrors and burden of this night are on my soul through you, and of you they

they shall be required. Ho, Ascanio! drag that adulterous villain here, his mistress is ready for her paramour.' She started from her knees, she fixed her eyes on the door by which I entered; she saw

* * * * *

" I *must* go on. They talk of the vengeance of Italian husbands; mine outgoes example. I caused him to be deliberately stabbed before her sight!!!

" I paused between every blow. I bid her listen to every groan! Poor distracted wretch! she thought the ravings of her love would disarm, instead of nerving my blows. When she found her shrieking supplications for 'mercy! mercy! mercy!' were vain, she became wilder than myself. With the frenzy of a lover, she reeled up and down, blind and breathless, echoing the faint cries of Verdoni, and cursing his murderers, whom she had a moment before knelt to. 'Devils! devils!' she shrieked, 'I do not pray, I do

do not kneel now; stab on! Oh, that my eyes would burst!’ Verdoni’s last blood-stifled groan came to her ear. ‘Ah, that groan was ease!’ she screamed. ‘He is dead! Ha! ha! ha! I laugh at ye now; he is dead, he is dead!’

“Staggering she sunk upon the body. Her *heart burst!* When I touched her, she was cold as a stone; her eyes fixed but lifeless, her limbs relaxed, her pulses extinct. When I found she was dead, gone without recall for ever, that *Erminia was dead!*—But I have no power to speak of that hour. I sprung forward with the speed of one who flies from destruction; destruction did indeed surround me on every side; and it was owing to this unexpected direction my passions took, and the inconceivable velocity with which I pursued it, that I escaped, for that night at least. I must have flown with the speed of a cloud chased by the storm, for I was many miles along the western

western shores of Naples by midnight. My horse, whom I had found in the wood, then sunk under me. I flew on foot, traversing the windings of the shore like a wave. My reason was not suspended, it was totally *changed*. I had become a kind of intellectual savage; a being, that with the malignity and depravation of inferior natures, still retains the reason of a man, and retains it only for his curse. Oh! that midnight darkness of the soul, in which it seeks for something whose loss has carried away every sense but one of utter and desolate privation; in which it traverses leagues in motion and worlds in thought, without consciousness of relief, yet with a dread of pausing. I had nothing to seek, nothing to recover; the whole world could not restore me an atom, could not shew me again a glimpse of what I had been or lost; yet I rushed on as if the next step would reach shelter and peace.

My

My flight was so wild and rapid, that it was equally impossible to calculate its direction or overtake its speed. I had disappeared while they were removing the corpses and the traces of blood. Other causes might have contributed to my escape: there was a storm, they said, a commotion both of air and earth. I recollect nothing of it but the report; but it probably deterred those who were not desperate like me.

“ Towards morning I sprung into a small bark, it was going to Sicily; but Sicily I soon quitted, and crossed into the Grecian isles. I had an inveterate loathing, not of the human form, but of the human form under an Italian garb; aye, of the houses and trees, the language and the very air: whatever I had formerly resembled, or been conversant with, was an abomination to me. I looked on them as a condemned spirit may be supposed to look on the body in
which

which he had sinned, now dark, deserted, and loathsome; at once the remembrancer of pleasure, and the incendiary of pain. It is remarkable, that during this term I adopted in desperation the very course that the most active and suspicious caution would have deliberately pursued. My frequent changes of residence, my private haunts, my solitude, and my disguise, preserved from discovery as effectually as if they had been intentional or even conscious.

“ I rambled from isle to isle, from sand to rock, without notice and without interruption. The people were poor and simple, they had no leisure for curiosity; my appearance terrified them, and they were glad when it was removed. My miserable food was easily procured, my clothes were now ragged, and my bed the bare earth. *This was a brother's doing!* Still I wandered on, for there was something I wanted: that something
was

was utter solitude, a total amputation from life. I had heard of a little barren islet, which was dreaded as the haunt of a spirit of wrecks and storms: I rowed myself thither in a boat one still night. Whether it was the residence of such a being, I cared not; it was enough for me no human being ventured there. Here I found all I needed, a cave, water, wild fruits, and during the winter more provisions than I could consume left on the shore by the superstitious people to propitiate the turbid spirit of the place.

“ Here I sunk into a strange kind of animal life; I became quite a creature of the elements; my propensities and habits ceased to be those of humanity, of social humanity at least. I lost the use of language; I forgot my own name; yet my time was sufficiently diversified by the changes of the season and the sky. When it was tempestuous I rushed abroad, I howled and shrieked with the voices of
the

the storm. I bared my pelted head and breast to the rain, and when cold and drenched retired to my cave and slept. When it was calm I sat on a crag of my cave and listened to the winds, whose wild and changeful moanings were wrought by the diversities of the shore into a quaint mimicry of human sounds, to the tide, whose lambent ripplings I *felt*, as well as heard, breathing tranquillity. I never thought of my former self, or of those with whom I had been ; I was conscious of something like a dark recess in my thoughts, from which I seemed to have emerged lately, and into which I did not wish to venture again. Sometimes I dreamt ; but my faculties were so confused that I only remembered my dream as something obscurely painful, something that interrupted that quiet exile from consciousness and thought, that seemed to be the *menstruum* of my present existence. I believe I might
have

have lingered out many years in this state, on the principle of the longevity of ideots.

“ One evening as I sat on the sea shore, I saw a boat at a small distance, which floated along its winding, as if rather to observe than to land. I lifted my heavy and stagnated eyes ; but when I saw the Italian habits in the boat, I flew to hide myself in my cave, shaking with horror. I did not venture out again till it was dark ; there were stars, but no moon : it was owing to this, and to the silent tread of my naked feet, that I approached unseen where two men were seated on a point of rock conferring. The Italian language came to my ear ; I listened with a blind and mechanical delight at first. I loved the sound (so wild are the inconsistencies of the human mind), though at first the words were unintelligible. I was quickly awakened to their full meaning. ‘ You are a bold

and daring devil, *Ascanio*,’ said one. ‘Yes, I *was once*, but I am almost spoiled for these feats now. Could I think I might hope for absolution I would turn penitent, aye, monk, and pray for the remainder of my days. The murder of the unfortunate cavalier and lady, who were as innocent as those blessed lights above, and the persecution of the wretched mad Count to this desolate and savage life ; nor even to let him rest in his den, to shed his blood on these wild sands, by all the saints I wonder this rock supports us !’—‘ Away, fool ! half the convents in Italy might be bribed with a *moiety* of the ducats we shall get for it.’

There was much more ; I listened for an hour ; they talked as without witness, as two murderers, solitary and undisguised. Erminia, the *unfortunate* lady, and the cavalier, *innocent !* and the *wretched mad Count*, persecuted to desperation and murder by his brother, and then by his
brother

brother traced to solitude, and slaughtered in his den!

“ Oh!—but I cannot, cannot; if I should but write her name, I shall write on for unnoted days and nights volumes filled only with her name. Late and impotent repentance, and cries of posthumous despair!

“ I *will* pursue my narrative. I retreated to my cave, with an instinctive provision for safety; yet when I came there I could neither devise nor employ a weapon if I had it. I fell on my bed of leaves, and awaited death. I saw a shadow darkening the entrance of my hut; one of them crept in as he would into the den of a savage, whom he feared to rouse by noise or light. I had no power of motion; by a strange but lucky infatuation I felt as if I was compelled to await the approach of my murderer. He drew near; in the darkness of my cave I could no longer see his steps, but

I *felt* them ; so dark was the nook in which I lay, that I felt his breath on my face, but could not see him. With an impulse, whose quickness prevented escape or resistance, I sprung up ; the part I fastened on darkling was his throat. I threw him to the ground ; my strength, naturally great, was rendered gigantic by my habits of hardihood and difficulty.

“ I felt him gasp and quiver with the motions of death ; I felt his vest for his stiletto, it was stuck in his belt unsheathed. I drew it out, and with steps that did not rouse the bat from its cleft, stole to the entrance of the cave. The other was bending over a crag that fenced it ; I sprung on him when he expected his associate : he started, and beheld a form scarce human holding a dagger to his throat.

“ He flew with the swiftness of fear, and I with the swiftness of revenge ;
delighted

delighted I perceived him toiling up a rock, which, isolated and bare, beetled over the sea, cutting off all retreat. He looked, and leaped; I bent over the ridge, and beheld him struggling in the waters. I returned to my cave; the body that lay there was black, and swoln, and stark. I did not lie in my cave that night; I vented my rage and anguish along the shores, in sounds as wild as the winds that swept them, sounds that I sometimes thought were echoed by wailing cries from the rock where I had compelled Ascanio to plunge into the dark and pitiless waters. Towards morning I searched the corse in the cave; I found letters, principally from my brother and his wife to the bearer, who was a public assassin, and his brother Ascanio.

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 * * * * * I was at first about to describe the effects of their perusal; but I feel I *must* not. I have a task to do,
 for

for which all that remains to me of intellect is necessary. Why should I waste it in sallies of voluntary frenzy? It is enough for me to detail the contents of these letters. *I will do it most calmly and unshrinkingly.* * * * * *

“ It appeared that my brother had been the former lover of my wife ; that his own marriage had been a match of angry disappointment, which, fermented by his wife’s ambition, had suggested to him the idea of working on my credulous and vindictive disposition ; and—— I will go on calmly and unshrinkingly. He had planted spies about the family of Amaldi, and he had suborned a depraved servant whom Verdoni had dismissed. The secret sorrows that so visibly clouded the House of Amaldi were quickly known. Erminia had in her earliest youth been attached to Verdoni ; her father, with common worldliness of character, hesitated, in the hope of a splendid suitor.

But

But his cold policy was spurned by the lovers; they were united privately in the church of St. Antonio, in the night of the 4th December, 1667, and the following winter Erminia was delivered of an infant daughter at the house of a relative not far from Naples. About this time Verdoni's regiment was stationed in the neighbourhood of Palermo, where a powerful banditti terrified and oppressed the country. The inhabitants requested the aid of military force, Verdoni's company marched against the banditti, but misled in the windings of a forest, were assailed by an ambuscade, and cut off to a man. The names of the officers who had perished were sent to Naples, and the first among them was that of Verdoni. Erminia's marriage had not been at this time avowed, and there was now no necessity for its avowal. She wept over her fatherless babe in solitude. At this moment my disastrous proposals were urged.

Wounded

Wounded and shocked, Erminia appealed to her father ; she told him her tale. She was answered by a command to marry the Count Montorio on pain of paternal malediction. She was told of the folly of sacrificing her youth and hopes to the cherishing of a widowed name, and of the wickedness of preferring duty to a dead husband to a living father. She wept, she trembled, and she obeyed. Oh ! she was all gentleness, all *melting*, *pliant*, *weeping* woman ! She impure ! She was formed of thrice-fanned snow, tempered with dew from the cup of the lily of the vale, and animated by some spirit who had bathed in the cold blood of spherul light ; she that should have been nested in my bosom, and fed with kisses like the suckling of my heart ; she — I have vowed to write her name no more.

Shortly after our fatal marriage, her husband, who had been taken prisoner by the banditti, and confined
in

in a subterranean cavern, after a perilous and strange emersion into light, returned to Italy. He returned in disguise, for he dreaded the pursuit of those from whom he had escaped. He returned, and found his wife the wife of another man, and the mother of other children ! No one dared to tell of his return to her, still less was it probable her family would disclose their shame to me, a shame their own selfish haste had incurred. She was wandering one evening in the woods, with her own attendant ; a voice called on her, she was retreating in affright ; again it called, a well-known voice of reproach and love. The next moments the lovers wept in agony on each other. To meet him often, to weep with him over the child of their sorrows, who could envy her this last sad consolation ? It was at this moment that my brother, prompted by his Tullia of a wife (for mere man was incapable of it), determined to

possess himself of rank and wealth without the doubtful and suspected means of poinard or poison. He knew neither of them could go more swiftly or silently to the seat of life than the infamy of the wife I adored, or the diminution of the honour I was an enthusiast in. He was safe, besides, for no one would venture to tell me that my wife was the wife of another, nor even if they suspected I knew it would they presume to comment on it. I was therefore shut up to the mercy of these two men, who had not kindness enough to stab me to the heart. The letters I had found in the cabinet had been written during the period of their *wedded separation* at Naples. Every expression of luscious and intimate tenderness occurred in them ; but from a necessary caution, all allusions to their real situation (which would have deceived me) were suppressed, lest they should be discovered by her father. During

ring my absence, my abused wife had intrusted her honour and her sufferings to my brother. She had informed him that Verdoni was about to quit Italy for ever; and that she proposed, after her confinement, to retire into a convent, and assume the veil. My murdered love! amid the anguish of passion her thoughts were holy as vestal dreams! She acknowledged my affection, she avowed her gratitude to me, she implored him to sooth my disappointments in pride and in passion—*mine*, who was planning her murder!

In the dark hour of solitary woe thus she leant on him, and thus he betrayed her! Oh! why did her fatal, fatal wish to spare my feelings prevent her making the disclosure herself? My suffering would have been indeed great, but my triumph would have been great also. I would have resigned her to her first love, to the husband of her youth; resigned her without a groan, though
my

my last had followed the sacrifice when they had left me alone. I would—But I am to tell not what I would have been, but what *I am*. In other parts of the letters I found they had resolved on a total massacre that night, that we were to have fallen by each other. Two victims had indeed fallen ; but I, as I have related, had escaped by an unexpected impulse of flight, to which I yielded in the madness of the moment, without thought of safety or of danger, and which the confusion of murder had prevented them from noticing till I was many miles from Muralto.

“ Since that period, which was about three years, Ascanio and his brother had pursued me through Italy ; they had pursued every track and shadow of intelligence with the hot and breathless diligence of a chase of blood, while my brother, trembling in his castle, spread a report of my death, and celebrated my funeral

funeral rites in the chapel of the family. They had at length discovered me, and their charge was death, without noise and without delay. Such was the intelligence of these letters, scattered up and down, conveyed in hint and reference, confident and familiar.

“ When I was perusing them, there was but one nerve in my heart whose motion was restless and inquiring, all the rest seemed seared and rivetted. I read on with an agitation which was the last alarm of nature—my *children* ! I read on—they *were dead* ! * * * *

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“ When I had read all, a fire seemed to spring up within me ; a dark, solid, unconsuming fire, that preyed without destroying. I know not how to describe my sufferings (for I always suffered in solitude, there was no voice of inquiry near me, no *shadow* of a friend to fling refreshment on my cold bed of leaves) ;
but

but surely never were spirit and body so strangely acted on by each other. The fire I speak of seemed to me corporal and visible. I remember sitting on a point of rock, and wondering it did not smoke and crumble beneath me ; I seemed to live in fire. My muscles and nerves, swoln and rigid with agony, were like rods of red hot metal ; my hairs hissed and sparkled with the flickering of flame when the wind moved them ; and my eyes, their sockets seemed glowing iron, and when I closed them, long tresses of dancing fire floated from them, and they seemed to turn on an inward world of flames, on which they gazed with the anguish, but not the short duration, that the rage of the elements permits.

“ I know not how long I was in this state ; I had no mark of time but day and night, and to them I had been often insensible, except that I think I was conscious of greater pain from the glare of the day. When I recovered, Erminia
and

and Verdoni were beside me: never for a moment since have I been insensible of their presence. They have been at different times my punishment and my consolation, my taskers and my companions. Four years in my rocky solitude I conferred with them alone, sometimes tranced by their whispers, and sometimes harrowed by their shrieks. I speak with the earnestness and simplicity of one who, convinced of what he speaks, is careless of being believed by others. The dreams of the night are easily dissolved, and strange shapes are sometimes seen to skim through the twilight of a cavern; but I have met them at noon, on the bare sunny shore. I have seen them on the distant wave, when its bed was smooth and bright as jasper; the curtained mist that hung on mole and breaker, and mingled with the sheeted spanglings of the surf, floated back from them, did not throw a fringe of its shadowy mantling on their forms. I could
not

not be deceived. Sometimes the light was glorious beyond imagination. Towards sunset I would sometimes see a small white cloud, and watch its approach ; it would fix on a point of the rock that rose beside my cave ; as twilight thickened it would unfold, its centre disclosing a floating throne of pearl, and its skirts expanding into wings of iris and aurelia that upbore it. By moonlight the pomp grew richer, and the vision became exceeding glorious. Myriads of lucent shapes were visible in that unclouded shower of light which fell from the moon on the summit of the rock ; myriads swam on its opal waves, wafted in a fine web of filmy radiancy, canopied with a lily's cup, and inebriate with liquid light. Among them sat the shadows of the lovers, sparkling with spherul light, and throned in the majesty of vision, but pale with the traces of mortality. There sat the lovers in sad and shadowy state

state together; so greatly unfortunate, so fatal, passing, fond. Sometimes, when stretched on my cold, lone bed, I have heard *her* voice warbling on the wind, touches of sweet, sad music, such as I have heard her sing when she thought herself alone and unheard. I have risen, and followed it, and heard it floating on the waters; I listened, and would have given *worlds to weep*. On a sudden the sounds would change to the most mournful and wailing cries, and Erminia, pale and convulsed as I saw her last, would pass before me, pointing to a gory shape that the waves would throw at my feet. Then they would plunge together into the waters, and where far off the moon shed a wan and cloudy light on the mid wave, I would see their visages rise dim and sad, and hear their cry die along the waste of waters.

“Often when in autumn the sun set among clouds and vapours, I sat at the
mouth

mouth of my cave to watch the scenery that followed. The clouds, dark, and rapid, and broken with strong stains of red, would assume wild resemblances to things I scarcely recalled; ships, and towers, and forests on fire, and moving shapes of things that never lived. Sometimes they formed a castle, a black mountain mass of structure, its turrets were fringed with flame, and the gleamy spots below seemed like fires peeping through casement and loop-hole, and the sanguine waters that reflected its shade seemed to moat it with blood; and hosts of embattled vapours, flushed with the hues of the stormy sky, seemed to march in mid air to attack it. Then, while I gazed, Erminia, in the first flash of the sieging lightnings, would burst on my sight with a face of wrath and menace, and behind her another form, dark with the rage of tempests. Oh! worse than the rage of tempests to me was his sight.

I have

I have fled ~~to~~ my cave, I have buried my face in my bed of leaves. But what shapes have I seen as the keen and subtle lightnings, glancing through cleft and crevice, filled the cavern with sheets of paly blue?

“ It was on one of those nights that, wild and resistless as the tempest, a thought rushed on my mind ; it was the only thought that for years had warmed my heart with a natural impulse, or convinced me I yet held alliance with the world of human beings. Do ye who read my story ask what was that thought ? I pray ye to pause a moment, and think on my state.

“ I was a nobleman, a representative of a noble house, whose honours I bore untarnished, and of whose honours I was proud. My wealth was great, my power greater ; the sphere and shadow of my influence included thousands, who were cherished and sustained by it. I was
 loved

loved by some, honoured by many, feared by many; and to the fear, such as remote and unbending dignity inspires, I was not averse. This was only a part of my character. I was, and I may now speak of myself as one who lives no more, a munificent patron, an invincible friend, an adoring lover. I was a husband, a father; my soul was wrapt up in my wife and children. In spite of my high thoughts and demeanour, I slept on the bosom of domestic love with a fondness of clasp and a softness of rest, such as the mildest spirit might seek in the humblest shed of privacy: such I was. I might have run my race in peace and honour: such I was. And what had I been made? by a *brother* I had cherished and saved, a *murderer*, a savage, an out-cast of both worlds, a denizen of the wilds in habit, a demon in soul!

There is no describing that depravation of humanity, both physical and moral, to
which

which he had reduced me. Nebuchadnezzar, who was driven from among men, and abode among the beasts, had probably no throbbings of remembered worth or dignity, no anguish of moral debasement to haunt his dark sleep. My sufferings comprehended the extremes of all a being could be human and suffer. I was the lover of an object no power could obtain or restore; I was the idolator of a fame which was extinguished and lost; I was a villain with unimpaired conscience; I was a madman with perfect consciousness. Is there one fool enough to ask what remained to me?

REVENGE!!!

Yes, from the bare breast of an island rock, from its starved, and naked, and raving inhabitant, from a wretch who might have been shewn for a spectacle through the streets of Naples, came a burst of vindictive energy that laid one of its proudest houses in the dust.

“ This

“ This event, of which I have hitherto sketched the motives, is the proper subject of this narrative. Almost the moment I conceived it, I conceived its progress, its means, and the very point of the criminal’s character and situation on which it was to be made to bear. To shew him the hollowness, the worthlessness, the nothingness of that for which he had sold himself under sin, was no longer an object with revenge or with conscience ; its own attainment had convinced him forcibly and awfully of it. In his letters I discovered he was a miserable man. It is usual to talk of the dreams of a murderer’s night ; but he was substantially wretched, wretched from suspicion, wretched from fear, wretched from the conviction that he had destroyed himself—for nothing. With him, therefore, appeal had been anticipated by conviction, and punishment superseded by remorse. But he was now surrounded
by

by a numerous family, for whose welfare perhaps he endeavoured to reconcile himself to guilt, and to believe that the offences that had benefited his children could scarce fail of pardon. *His* children were to shine out on the world in unsuspected magnificence and unmixed acclamations; while *mine*, the native heirs of Muralto, mouldered in their mother's bloody grave, unwept but by their exiled father, the father who had lain them there! Whoever is acquainted with its direful event, may have now anticipated my purpose,—to make the children the punishers of the father, and to combine the eternal spoliation of the name and honours wrested from me with the fall of their usurper.

* * * * *

“ I am aware that so horrible an idea never entered the human mind before. Let him that is disposed to execrate me only cast his eye on the preceding pages.
I do

I do not say I will be justified; but it will at least be confessed that he who was injured as never man was injured, should be revenged as man was never avenged. It is remarkable, that from the moment I conceived this idea, my reason was not only restored, with scarce a subsequent interval of insanity, but my powers were confirmed, condensed, invigorated to a degree of invincible iron-like force and stability, to which alone such an undertaking could be possible. I had no failing weakness of head or of heart, no suspension of my purpose from the frailties of humanity or intellect from that hour for ever.

“ A total desertion of my savage habits was my first resolution. I inured myself, after many distortions of reluctance, to bear the sight of the human face and the sound of the human voice. After some time I crossed to the next inhabited islet. I endeavoured to reconcile myself to human

man

man life; to sit for an hour without start or exclamation; to eat without walking about at my food; and (most difficult of all) to pass the night in a bed, where at first I found rest impracticable. It was here, when the first vehemence of my purpose had expended itself, I began to scan the difficulties that surrounded it, and to find them numberless and perilous. I am persuaded no being whose character was not partially tinged by madness could have been adequate to its execution. I have no desire now to spend my time in magnifying the wonders of it, and gratifying a miserable ambition with the shuddering praise of the strength of a demon's wing in his flight to mischief. I have no intention of rehearsing my mental debates and toils, I merely purpose to tell their result.

“ My first step was to pass into Turkey in Asia. I traversed most of the countries of Asia Minor; I visited Syria, I travelled into Persia,

I crossed the Persian Gulf into Arabia. I traversed the *continent* of Arabia, and winding along the shores of the Red Sea, passed into Egypt. I visited its upper and lower regions, and returning to Cairo, embarked for Europe. An accident brought me to Candia, where assuming the habit of a Greek monk, I went on board a vessel then bound to Rhodes, but which finishing her voyage, left me in Sicily; there outwardly reconciling myself to the Catholic Communion, I procured a recommendation to the Superior of a convent in Naples, and returned to my native city.

“ I do not mean to give a detail of the sufferings of a solitary stranger in a progress of fifteen years, through countries, fierce, lawless, and sanguinary. I acknowledge myself to have been almost constantly in a state of sufferance and danger, often in one of extremity. If
it

it were asked by what means I escaped with life from such persecution, I solemnly declare I know of none, except total poverty, a hardened constitution, and a mind of desperation. A resolution, the strongest that ever occupied a strong mind, was sustained by gigantic strength and hardihood of body, the fruit of my exile and my savagery. My object in this long progress, was what no calamities could suspend, the study of the human character in its fiercer and gloomier features. Even a dungeon could shew me wardours, and torturers, and criminals. It will be asked why did I seek a knowledge of the human character, where it subsists in a state so rude and unvaried, where ignorance and oppression combine to forbid the expansion of elementary, or the acquisition of fictitious features, and to confine life to a weary, unimproving monotony?

“ I answer, my search was after that part of the human character, which is equally visible through all the modifications of society, and the caprices of the individual, which is equally discernible in the savage and in the sage, but which is generally marked by more strong and prominent lines in the ruder parts of life. My search was for the existence of superstition, in every form it assumes, and for every mode of influence that could be exercised on it, for the means by which that influence might be acquired, and the possible extremes to which the passion might be urged by art and terror. Had this search been pursued in Europe, the consequence might have been what I dreaded more than the sufferings I encountered in Asia and Africa, detention, examination, discovery; perhaps an immersion into the Bastile in France, or an eternal consignment to the dungeons of the Inquisition

sition in Spain or Italy. In Asia, if my existence was destroyed, my name and purpose would perish along with it. I should not be remembered as the man who only achieved a vast *thought*; and died from the debility of its execution. From the first moment, I was convinced that *superstition was my only engine*, the only instrument that could accomplish so great a purpose; the only one that could be applied to its most minute, and its most operose parts alike; that could dissect the most subtle and capillary fibres of the human heart, and penetrate the iron fortresses of power; that could wrench the frame of nature, and sport with the varieties of the human character; that could make the virtuous consider a crime as a duty, and the vicious make a deity of a dream. This was the only foundation that could support the structure that I purported to raise on it. I remembered my own struggles and reluctance,

luctance, till something like a shadowing of fate stole over my mind, I remembered the wretched impostor that they brought to me at Baiaæ.

“The execution of my purpose, perhaps, was some protection to me, in countries whose wild inhabitants are yet deeply susceptible of the delights and the terrors of superstition. In Turkey, therefore, I was a Grecian conjuror. Through Asia Minor and Syria I was one of those dervises whose supposed knowledge in secret studies is no obstruction to the sanctity of his person and profession. In Persia I was a Magian worshipper of fire, the most ancient superstition in the world. In Egypt I was all these successively, for in Egypt are mingled all the superstitions of the East. Among the vulgar I was a conjuror, but among the adepts only a novice; nor in truth could I well be more, had I been versed in all the dark wisdom of Europe, Rosicrucian,

cian, or Sully's, or Nostradamus, or Albertus Magnus's ; had I been a student in the wizard walls of Salamanca, I must have bowed to the wands of the Oriental and African sages. There are among these men, however ignorant both in physics and literary antiquity, some powers still existing of the most extraordinary kind. I am perfectly willing to ascribe the wonders they produce to causes merely natural, but still the effects are such as prove an acquaintance with the depths of nature, which the most erudite and studious European has not yet obtained.

“ I mention as an instance, that power of disarming serpents and noxious reptiles, possessed by some of the most ignorant and grovelling wretches I have ever met with in Egypt, a power which they pretend to exercise with spell and charm, but which when *I acquired*, I found to be attainable by means merely phy-

physical. I mention these things merely to intimate the line of operations I sought, and the powers I acquired, amid the luxuries of nature, and the labours of art, the wonders of antiquity, or the magnificence of recent dominion ; in the mosque or in the cavern, the desert, or the Bazar, I pursued but one object; my labour was never remitted, nor my tenacity ever relaxed.

“ It was in the spring of the year 1689 I returned to Naples, my first object to inquire into the situation and characters of the family, my next to be introduced among them. I easily learnt the former, the Count was gloomy and solitary ; the family lived in retired grandeur ; the sons had many splendid qualities, but their minds were of the dark, superstitious complexion of their house. The latter also was easy, for the Count had become a devotee. It will perhaps be a matter of astonishment, that having arrived in my native city,

city, and having means sufficient to prove my identity and my injuries, I did not prefer the substantial compensation of my restored honours and enjoyments to a visionary and bloody revenge.

“ It will cease to astonish, when my story is read with more attention. It will be discovered that with me, ambition was only the ornament of life, happiness and love, (however hostile to their softness my character may appear) were its substance, its soul. My name, my dignity, were only the cupola that though raised to the summit, constituted the least necessary part of the pile of my happiness. For whom should I seek to be great? Was there another Erminia in the world? Were my children’s graves to be opened by the trumpet of a herald? They might be avenged, but never recalled. No; I saw, without a groan, the palace and castle built by my ancestors. I saw their jewels, their treasures, their magnificence

sparkling round the forms of those who had undone me, I saw without a thought of resumption, but with a determination of revenge. Ambition had not left a shadow on my mind, of love only the soul subsisted still ; but of revenge, both body and soul lived within me, in a state of vigour and vitality, still capable of the most powerful functions, still imperiously demanding their sacrifice. From my own experience, I am convinced that revenge is the most long-lived of passions. Could my brother have poured at my feet his palaces, his treasures, his honours, could he have poured along with them, what was beyond the reach of human power to restore, my name, my peace, my *inward dignities* unclouded and undebased ; could he have done all this, I would have spurned it all. I had but one faculty, one passion, one appetite. My body was but a corporal vehicle for
revenge,

revenge, its spirit seemed to actuate me instead of a soul.

“ Let those who wonder at the temerity of my undertaking, think on the requisites I possessed for its success, and the train of preparation those requisites had long been in. My body was as a body of adamant; my mind was capable of filling and directing the energies of such a frame; I was invincible to the fatigues of famine, of sleeplessness, or of toil; no difficulties could exhaust, no dangers could repel; the world, its temptations, and its terrors were like dust beneath my feet. I possessed a knowledge of the human temper, deep and accurate, together with a patience of caprices and anomalies, which only experience can teach. No sallies of violence could intimidate, no rigour of obduracy could weary me. With regard to the immediate means of effect-

effecting my purpose, my mind or rather my memory was a perfect *Thesaurus terrorum*. I had powers to confound the deliberate, and to scare the bold. My body as well as my mind conspired with my purpose. My figure was gigantic, my countenance scarce bore resemblance to humanity, the intonations of my voice were like the roar of the storm and the cataract, it had been my delight in the rage of insanity to imitate; and above all, I possessed from memory a perfect knowledge of secret passages, and subterranean recesses, both at Muralto and the palace at Naples; these I had loved to explore when I was their inmate, from an enthusiastic passion for gloom and for antiquity. Such was the preparation. That I may not be thought to lay a chimerical stress on the influence of superstition, I shall mention some circumstances that occurred beyond the immediate

diate range of my purpose. Amadeo, Duke di Monte Ceruli, was a libertine whom I had known in the earlier part of my life, about ten years previous to my marriage, when I was a gay Nobleman at Naples. I was with him and other Cavaliers at an assembly, upwards of thirty years ago; the conversation happened, strangely enough, to turn on the existence of spirits; the subject was more congenial to my mind than the babble of levity, and I spoke on it with my accustomed solemn energy. Monte Ceruli ridiculed the subject and the emphasis with which I spoke on it. I did not choose to altercate with such a trifler, and giving the conversation a ludicrous turn, proposed that we should enter into an engagement, that whoever died first, should appear to the survivor, as a punishment for scepticism, or a confirmation of orthodoxy. He accepted it, laughing; but it was not with laughter he received

received the proof. When in the prosecution of my plan, I appeared to Ippolito at Naples, while surrounded by a party of cavaliers, I observed Monte Ceruli among the number. When I had produced the effect of my visit, I retreated behind the tapestry, where a concealed door communicated with a secret passage, through which I escaped while they were searching for me. This was a contrivance indeed easily detected, but I had chosen my time well, it was easy to disappear amid the confusion of terror and drunkenness. The party dispersed in every direction in pursuit of me ; as I was evading them, I met Monte Ceruli, who, of all the party was alone. He detained me ; I heard others approaching ; I dreaded discovery ; I dreaded at least the dissolution of my spiritual character. I unmasked, and addressed him in my own voice, which I had carefully concealed since my return to Naples.

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In its hollow and peculiar tones I told him I was the spirit of his departed companion. He fell to the ground insensible, and I am told continued so till his death. On the Duke di Pallerini, who was sent by the king (in consequence of a confession made by a dying domestic to a monk at Naples, but which involved nothing but general suspicions) to inquire into the mysterious disappearance of the late possessor of the title, on him no such influence was attempted. I knew the inquiry would terminate in my brother's detection, and consequent punishment, for I knew his own terrors would betray him, but though I had devoted him to punishment, I determined by no one but me should it be inflicted. Calling the Duke therefore to another apartment, after adjuring him to secrecy, I discovered myself, and proved the futility of a charge for the murder of one whom he beheld alive. It was owing to
this

this resolution of reserving to myself the powers and mode of retribution, that a circumstance occurred, whose mystery is most dark and voluminous, and whose mystery can be disclosed only by me. I was (while yet a brother in the Franciscan convent,) returning from a pilgrimage to Rome, when a report which was diffused every where, met my ear, that a discovery had been made by some dying man, to a monk in Apulia, relative to the family of Montorio, whose honours, whose very existence, it was said, was involved in its substance.

By whom such a discovery could be made, (of which *I* believed myself the solitary possessor on the face of the earth,) was of less moment to inquire, than how to obstruct its disclosure. I was resolved that neither the Inquisition nor the Vatican, no power, secular or spiritual, should wrest my victim from me. The monk, it was reported, was on his

his journey to Rome, to procure an audience of the Pope. He travelled with all the inconsistency of fear in his preparations ; he was escorted by a strong guard, yet affected to conceal his name and the motives of his progress. I had arrived on the close of my pilgrimage, at a town called Bellano, I understood there were a number of travellers at the inn, and I hastened there to receive some intelligence on the subject. I found them engaged in discussing it ; a solitary, silent pilgrim, did not interrupt them. I was suffered to listen, and that was all I desired. I found that the monk was expected to pass the night at Bellano, on his journey. Many, whose business lay in other directions, had quitted them for a chance of meeting this man, about whom curiosity was thus vividly employed, and all had agreed to sit together in the great hall till he arrived, if his arrival was delayed till morning. About mid-

midnight the monk came. He looked pale, weary, and terrified with his undertaking. He looked around suspiciously and dejectedly. I was the only person who wore the sacred habit in the company, this accident determined his addressing himself to me, and to this I owe the obstruction of his progress. He spoke confidentially, as one weary of the restraints of silence and secrecy, and glad to unburthen a weak mind of a disproportioned load. He acknowledged he was terrified by the importance and danger of the commission imposed on him,—the ruin and probably the revenge of a powerful family. “I would,” said he, “I were in my cell again, at the foot of the little wooden crucifix, beside my pallet; I am, however, safe to-night. I remember visiting this house before I took the vows; there is a chamber of peculiar construction in it. I have no dread of assassin, or spy, or emissary of
the

the Montorio family, while sleeping in that chamber. I know not why, but my mind is wonderous heavy and fearful to-night." I endeavoured to encourage him, and inquired the construction of the chamber he described. "This house," said he, "was formerly the haunt of robbers, who contrived in many of the apartments, devices for escape or concealment. In one of the chambers there is a trap-door, acted on by a spring, which is continued through the wall to the adjacent apartment; beneath it is a flight of spiral steps, hollowed in the wall, and communicating with subterranean vaults, of which the extent is unknown. Should I be disturbed by any apprehensions, I can immerge myself beneath the trap-door, and remain there unsuspected, till all search or hope of my recovery had ceased." Childish as this expedient was, I appeared to approve of it, and by affecting to

to

to doubt the principle of the construction, led him to explain it sufficiently for my purpose. To *that* there was but one thing wanting,—how to fix him in that part of the room where the construction of the trap-door might operate. To effect this, I stole to his chamber, and placed a small table, on which was a crucifix, on the very spot where the boards were disjoined. Weary and timid, the monk retired to his apartment, mine (to which the spring extended, and which he had intreated me to occupy for *his security*) was the adjacent one. I watched him through a crevice of the wainscote, I saw him approach the fatal spot, and prostrate myself on it. At that moment I applied my hand to the spring, (which was only a sliding rope with a weight, and which made part of the furniture of the hangings) the trap-door opened beneath him, and I heard him plunge into the chasm with a suddenness

ness that prevented his last scream, if he uttered one, from being heard. Never was a project so critically completed.

He was swallowed up as by the earth opening her mouth; not a vestige of him remained, when the trap-door was replaced. He was precipitated through the circular hollow down which the stairs wound, to a vault of depth incalculable. Of the confession, which he always *carried in his bosom*, he assured me there was not another copy extant. Its subject, therefore, had perished with him. The secret of the trap-door, he also informed me, was unknown to the proprietors, and confined to me and himself. This information proved to be sufficiently true, for among the inquiry and commotion this strange event occasioned, no one suspected or examined the construction of the flooring. I was satisfied to remain ignorant of the means and
agent

agent in this extraordinary confession. I was satisfied to let it moulder with the corse of him who bore it, since I had now extinguished the last gleam of light that the hands of *strangers* had presumed to throw on the gloomy secrets of our house. Am I asked whether I felt no compunctious hauntings for the murder of an innocent man? I answer, as much as a giant, who scales a mountain, feels for the insects he crushes in his progress.

“ Shortly after this event, I entered into the Count’s family as his confessor, and learned the characters of his sons. That was not indeed my first object, my first was to find out the grave of Erminia and her children, and there——But I will not violate the sacredness of my sufferings; I will not, for they would not, if disclosed, be believed. No one would ascribe human feelings to *me*; no one could believe *me* capable of sorrow. I
would

would not have mentioned the subject but that the circumstances of my nightly penance there are connected with the events of my story.

“ The brothers I discovered were of different characters. The elder, who resided at Naples, was volatile and impetuous ; the younger, dark and deliberate. Perhaps those who think they have satiated wonder with my depravity, will still wonder that I should determine to sacrifice *both*. I understood, that united in the strictest friendship, they were inaccessible to the rest of the family. Had I assailed either separately, as their confidence was unbounded, the interference of the other would have frustrated my purpose ; but as they held no communication with the rest of the family, their mutual confidence could only increase their mutual fear.

“ Worlds should not bribe me to a detail of the devices by which I subdued
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the intellects and integrity of these youths to my purpose. Worlds did I say!—What in the reach of imagination could prevail with me to retrace those images of wickedness and horror, but the vindication of my *victims*? Yes, their vindication; their vindication which I now pursue with ten thousand-fold the devotion I once did their ruin. What but that could make me proclaim these mysteries of iniquity? What but that could *make me live* to proclaim them? I will prove it as plain, as palpable as day light; it was impossible for mere human nature to evade or to resist the snares the subtlety of my vengeance had wound around them. Around *them*!—Whom?—But soft, if possible—not many hours remain to me.

“As soon as I understood their different characters, I commenced my assaults. Their distance from each other was an advantage to me; their different situations

situations suggested different modes of temptation to me. Ippolito, who was in the concourse of a populous city, I determined to subdue by the force of spectacle and sensible representation, mixed with something of astrological jargon, to which I knew he was addicted. Annibal I devoted to the influence of solitary terror, and the supposed incumbrance of a task assigned him by a spiritual agent: strong means to prevail with the inmate of an ancient castle, whose mind was gloomy, and whose sense of duty was rigid and inflexible.

Over Annibal, my influence was in a great measure anticipated by his own restlessness and solicitude, the uneasy effervescence of a vigorous mind, wasting itself in gloom and solitude. I heard him questioning an old domestic named Michelo, whom I remembered to have seen in other days, but the remembrance woke no kindliness in me now. I found

Annibal so intent on his inquiries, and the old man so contrary to all my expectations, so well prepared to satisfy them, that dreading the anticipation of my purpose, from the increasing importunities of one and the feeble reserve of the other, I interfered, and privately forbade Michelo to communicate with the Signor any further. Whether my earnestness betrayed a resemblance to sounds and features, Michelo must have remembered; or whether it was the weakness of a mind broken with age and superstition, I know not; but it is certain, that from the hour Michelo received this intimation, he ceased to believe me a human being; his terrors, though they secured his confidence, preyed on his health, and I have to number this unhappy among my involuntary victims. If indeed he suspected me to be my former self, his penetration, or his memory, were beyond those of my own brother, or all who
had

had ever known or remembered me; yet I do not think my travels, my hardships, my sufferings, any thing, had altered me effectually, till my heart and disposition underwent that change that surpassed the impressions of all.

Meanwhile my toils closed rapidly round Annibal: the tomb of Erminia, which I visited every night; her coffin, which, in pursuance of a rigid penance-vow, I tinged every night with my blood; witnessed strange encounters:—Sometimes they watched me as I wandered thither with my lonely lamp, which they believed to be borne by no earthly hand; and sometimes they pursued me into the vault, whence they retired, shuddering with visionary horrors, and often besmeared with my blood.

I was in the habit of visiting the apartments of Erminia, they had been deserted since her death, and I visited through avenues known only to myself,

in undisturbed solitude and security.— One evening while I was gazing on the bloody traces that marked the floor where Verdoni fell, I heard steps approaching. I had scarce time to conceal myself behind the tapestry, when Annibal and Michelo entered; I was at first impelled to start forth, and scare them into flight; but reflecting, that whatever increased the influence of superstition, established mine, I contrived, by looking through a rent in the tapestry, which represented a figure in the act of pointing, and by communicating to *its* arm, the motion of mine, to impel them to a search which discovered the body of Verdoni. It had been interred in a recess of the wall by Ascanio.

On another occasion, on entering the ruined chapel, which nightly witnessed my terrible orisons; I found Annibal and Michelo already there. I extinguished my lamp, and attempted to escape into the vault; Michelo confused

fused and in the dark, obstructed me; with a nervous grasp, I seized, dragged him in with me, and closed the iron grate. Annibal hastened to the castle for assistance. During this interval, I addressed my prisoner in the hollow tones of death; I reproved his presumption, and darkly intimated those disasters which I was preparing for the house of Montorio. The old man listened to me in terror, and died the next day of the fears of superstition, and the dread of being involved in the punishment of crimes, he suspected too justly.

About this period, the monk to whom Michelo had made his dying confession thought the suspicions it contained too momentous to be suppressed, he therefore communicated them to his superior, who laid them before the king, by whom the Duke di Pallerini was dispatched, to inquire into the disappearance of the late Count of Montorio, his wife Erminia

minia di Amaldi, and their children.—How this terminated with regard to the inquiry, is already well known; with regard to my victim Annibal, its conclusion was momentous indeed. I did not think him falling into my snares with sufficient facility; I required to have him more in my own power, that he should look more to me as the proper agent of the wonders he had witnessed or imagined.—I effected my purpose unsuspected. On the Duke di Pallerini's approach to the castle, I was commissioned by my brother, (from whom I had never concealed my knowledge of his guilt, and who also viewed me with a kind of shadowy fear,) to remove the mouldering corse of Verdoni, lest the Duke, the extent of whose information they could not conjecture, should direct his search thither. I entered the apartments, removed the corse, and retiring left *the passages open*. I bore the remains of Verdoni to my closet

closet, where I believe *they were seen by Annibal's servant*, Filippo, whose curiosity was at least sufficiently punished by meeting me in the close of evening, with the skeleton in my arms which I was about to convey to a vault at the extremity of the passage I was traversing. I perceived this fellow, who was bold and curious, followed me, I raised the carrion head above my cowl, and he fled in terror.

On that night, Annibal repaired again to the forbidden apartments; I informed the Count of his son's dangerous spirit of discovery, and led him to the spot. The criminals were confined; this was what I wished. On a mind weakened by loneliness and fear, I believed my influence would be resistless. Not easily convinced or subdued, Annibal long resisted the array of terrors I spread before him; I mingled opiates with his food that I might enter his prison unperceived, I screamed in boding and unearthly

earthly tones in the passages of the tower. I told him a tale, that while it strongly referred to the strange objects he had recently witnessed, terminated in the terrible event to which it was my purpose to lead him. Still he resisted, though he resisted more feebly. I conceived another plan. I appeared to accede to a plan proposed by the Count, to remove him by poison. I prepared an opiate of an extraordinary power, for among the secrets of which I had acquired the knowledge in the East, those of pharmacy and philtre had not been forgotten. The operation of this I knew would be sufficiently strong to deceive his father with the expected resemblance of death; and while it continued, I purposed to convey him to the vaults of the castle; where, remote from all influence but mine, I believed he would cease to resist that influence longer.

His

His prison was not sufficiently gloomy, nor were his spirits properly subdued for my purpose.

The plan was defeated by the dexterity of Filippo, who contrived to administer to me the opiate I had prepared for his master, and during its effect, drew from my vest the keys of the passage through which I had intended to convey him. They escaped from the castle, nor when I recovered was I sorry for their escape, I knew I should overtake them, and when I did, the terror which the appearance of one they must believe *invulnerable by poison*, would excite, I knew would be more than a balance for the suspension of my influence during the interval of their flight. But the Count was not so easily reconciled to the escape of the fugitives. Spies were employed, and immense rewards circulated for their discovery clandestinely; these were at length successful about the time that Annibal on his progress

to Puzzoli, paused at a village where circumstances beyond the reach of conjecture detained him.

The influence I had obtained over the mind of the Count, was mixed and extraordinary.—My austerities, my superhuman abstinence and contempt of fatigue, and pain, and watching, had raised me to the highest pitch of his estimation as a devotee. For my interference between his danger and the requisitions of Pallerini, he felt a kind of visionary gratitude, and there were other facts of my character, that mingled awe and wonder with the controul I held over him. He perceived that I was perfectly possessed not only of those dark events whose secrecy he had believed inaccessible, but of almost every other part of his life; these subjects were therefore *spared* in our conversations by a kind of silent compromise. They were referred to, but not spoken of; he heard me hint my know-

6 ledge

ledge of them without starting, but he could not bear to speak of them himself. He certainly regarded me as a being not of this world, his mind, weakened by the perpetual harassings of guilt and danger, reposed on the idea of a visionary protector; and timid and jealous of its security, pleased itself with the thought of employing a secret and resistless minister of death. Hence he would at one time employ me as an assassin without remorse; and at another, consult me as a saint, without superstition; for where the human character is not supposed to exist, human guilt vanishes also. Believing me one to whom all things were known, he ceased to have any compunctious reserve; and believing me one to whom almost all things were possible, he called on me without hesitation, for that assistance which he believed could be conferred by *me* without a crime.

Such was the influence I had acquired over a man agitated by the fears of unsteady

steady guilt, and the anguish of imperfect penitence, sanguinary from the dread of discovery, and superstitious from the experienced erosions of conscience, anxious to retain what had been acquired by blood, yet desirous to combine the pardon of guilt with its security. Such was the influence I was solicitous to acquire, the utmost extent of my vengeance was to the limits of *this* world. Men may smile at these illusions of romantic revenge, but it is certain that while I devoted him to death, I led him a pilgrimage of saintly preparation to it, while no power could wrest my victim from me, or buy from me one of his dying groans. I prayed, I watched, I wept with him. I sentenced the sinner, but I tried to save the penitent.

“ I will now rehearse the more dark and complicated means resorted to with Ippolito. I discovered, what in Naples is easily discoverable, a number of those wretches who, under various denomi-
tions,

tions, profess to hold converse with another world. To these I told a tale sufficiently plausible, and what was more plausible, I told them out handfuls of gold. The liberality or the superstition of the Count had supplied me abundantly. My plan required the aid of numbers, and it required a diversity and costliness of preparation, and of all most difficult, it required that my victim should not be *undecided* by the vulgar rapacity of my associates, which I satisfied clandestinely myself. My first application to Ippolito was in the jargon of his favourite study. On this and many other occasions, the darkness of my habit, and the inconceivable swiftness of my motions, befriended the obscurity I affected. Afterwards I concealed myself in the confessional of a church, whither I had led him, and which I knew had a private recess, and left him with the belief that I had melted into the elements. Another time I led him to a vault, where lay a
body

body from whose mortal fate I wished to suggest to him his own.

“ At all times, by my knowledge of the passages of the palace, I had opportunities of leaving letters in his apartment, and once of entering it while he was there, where my shewing a family ring, and telling a mysterious story of its last possessor, contributed not a little to his wonder and perplexity. At length when I believed him sufficiently impressed with fantastic notions of my character and agency, I led him to a subterranean vault, where the disguises of my associates, the quaint solemnity of our language, the blue and vaporous light that played on objects not to be described, displayed every device whose influence could abuse or witch the senses or the mind.

But I discovered in both my victims that whatever facility they betrayed to the admission of gloomy and fantastic impressions, they both revolted with

with

with equal abhorrence of insulted integrity from the *end* those impressions were designed to lead to. Ippolito, impetuous and eccentric as he was pure and noble, would never have been intangled but in a web of wickedness so fine and intricate, that *human* strength could not bear its powers unhurt from its witching hold. By the skill of one of our associates, an exact model of the faces of Ippolito and the Count was procured in wax; they were moulded into masks, and the former was assumed by another, who was in figure strikingly like Ippolito. This man, placing himself in a recess of the vault where I led my victim, represented by his gestures reflected in a shaded mirror, the anguish of a mind impelled to an involuntary crime; at the moment that Ippolito, touched by a gloomy sympathy, bent over the mirror, the man uncovered his mask, and Ippolito beheld his living likeness.

“The

“The solicitude thus excited was augmented by delay and dramatic illusions, till no longer master of his intellects, and scarce retaining his turbid and confused perceptions, he was led into another vault, and told that to obtain the knowledge he required, he must propitiate the spirit of the night by shedding the blood of a naked and unresisting victim, who was bound on an altar, dimly seen in the darkness of the vault. I remember his resistance too well. At length by the temptation of that fatal thirst of invisible knowledge which constituted the whole wonder of my influence (the engine by which I could wrest the whole moral world), he was induced to plunge his poinard into the breast of a *waxen image*, which spouted out blood upon his hands, and from which withdrawing the covering, I disclosed the face of *his father*.

“From that moment he was sealed and set apart as mine. He never could
expel

expel from his conscience the stain of imaginary blood ; he never could expel that nameless dread that whispered if the object he had mangled was not the living and corporal frame of his father, it must be an inmate of that world which is peopled with shadowy resemblances of *this*. This conjecture confirmed the visionary power of those who could summon such appearances, that power verified its own predictions, and its predictions announced that he should perish as the assassin of his father. From that time I pursued him into crowds as well as society, perpetually reminded him of the midnight hour, perpetually held up to him the gory weapon ; and found, from his failing resolution, that even the influence of superstition may be darkened and deepened by the consciousness of guilt.

“ In a short time he fled from my persecutions ; he quitted Naples. This event I had expected from his impetuosity, and

and made sufficient provision for it. I had diffused every where what his imprudence had assisted me in diffusing, reports of his nightly wanderings, and of his being mated in some horrible league with unblessed souls. The report spread around him an atmosphere of moral pestilence ; every one shrunk from his presence, while the terrors that attended the suspicion of his presence gave to his progress a notoriety that marked every step he took, even to the distance of Muralto. At this period, by the wayward flight of my victims, they were both conducted, though unconsciously, to spots so near each other, that my double agency was easily united.

The Count's confidence in powers which he believed were not those of a mortal minister, now compelled me to leave the castle. He had received from the abbess of a convent, whose name I now forget, but which was destroyed in the late commotions

motions of the earth, a letter acquainting him that the novice Ildefonsa Mauzoli, who had always shewed the utmost reluctance to assume the veil, had in consequence of an accident been seen by a young cavalier, who she understood was his son, and by whose sudden and impetuous passions not only her *profession* was delayed, but even her release insisted on. She added, that Ildefonsa's resolution had been confirmed by the presumption of her lover, who, it was easy to discover, had made his professions of love and liberation but too acceptable to her.

The Count, on receiving this intelligence, evinced a distraction that amazed me; I could scarce pacify him by my promises to hasten to the spot, and mar the dreams of the lovers. This I had at all events intended, as this was the period I intended to convince my victims no distance of space could shelter them from me.

“ In

“ In the interval of my hurried departure, the Count had but time to acquaint me, that Ildefonsa Mauzoli was the *un-owned child of Erminia and Verdoni*, who had been brought up in the solitude of a convent, and whom he had devoted to the veil, though in vain. He adjured me to hasten and prevent by *the most decisive measures* the event of this disastrous passion, of which it was easy to see he dreaded more than he disclosed of mischief and horror.

I left Muralto, and when I saw Ildefonsa, was convinced nothing but her final separation from Annibal could again place him in my power. She was the picture of her mother; I dreaded her beauty, I dreaded her excellencies, I dreaded those bland and balmy influences which innocence and love must produce on the most corroded mind. I felt that Annibal, in her arms, would wake from my persecutions as from a horrid vision. I determined she should

should die. Such was the Count's determination, and the abbess, wearied and provoked by her opposition, acceded readily.

In my journey to the convent, I heard that Bellano, the place where the unfortunate monk had perished with his confession, was not a mile from the convent; it was now deserted and destroyed, rendered almost a waste by indigence and superstition. This intelligence suggested to me a new and singular resolution. I determined to visit it, to explore the vault into which the monk had been precipitated, and possess myself of the papers that mouldered there with his corse. In the event of a public developement awaiting my purpose and character, I knew these papers might render me essential service. The approach to a place shunned by all was probably safe and easy, and as the abbess informed me there were vaults beneath the convent in the direction of Bellano, with the extent of which no inmate

inmate of either was acquainted, I suspected a communication between them, and the immense and unexplored windings into which the subterranean passages at Bellano spread.

I set out from the convent in the evening, and, lost in musing, wandered from my way, till looking round me, I beheld a range of mountain and rock I had never seen before. I was about to retrace my path, when near me extended at the foot of a tree, I beheld Ippolito. I determined to improve this accident. I approached, addressed him, and then bounded away into a woody dell, so tangled and intricate, that it defied all his attempts to penetrate. On emerging into the open country, I perceived him still pursuing me, and was compelled again to change the direction I had adopted to avoid him; for it was the policy of my influence to render it rare and solemn. I stopped at a town where I guessed he would follow
me,

me, and where, after dropping some mysterious hints of the character of my pursuer, I desired he should be told I had proceeded to Bellano. Thither he followed me; and there, though impeded by the interruptions of him and his servant, I descended into the cavity, and found amid the decayed garments of my victim, who had been dashed in pieces by his fall, the important papers I sought.

Ippolito followed me into the vault, as I expected; my purpose in leading him to Bellano had been to amaze with a wild and magic display of powers that seemed to mock the bounds of space and matter, sometimes to skim the air, and sometimes to dive into the entrails of earth. When I had effected this, I glided away, and through passages which I had explored previous to his descent, I regained the cemetery of the convent of St. Ursula. I entered the chapel, time enough to discover that my
plan

plan had succeeded. Ildefonsa, to whom a strong opiate had been administered, was extended on a bier, and after a tumult of unavailing opposition, she was borne yet insensible to the cemetery, where I left her with a villain of firmer hand than myself. Where extinguished humanity had never awoke a throb, the resemblance of Erminia made me—I will not say what; I will not *pollute this page with a human tear*.

“During the interval previous to Ildefonsa’s imaginary death, Annibal’s resort to the convent had given me opportunities almost undisturbed of renewing my persecutions. Agitated by unhappy love, and terrified by the unaverted hauntings of a being whom (supposed) poison could not destroy, Annibal’s virtue or his patience hesitated almost to yielding. But my business was now with Ippolito.

“In the commotions of that night he
had

had been wafted down the river, and the next day he entered Pozzoli, I know not with what purpose. I followed him unperceived, and the accidental mention of an absurd tradition suggested a plan, in the event of which Ippolito was utterly subdued.

“ While I was revolving this plan, I perused the papers which I had found in the vaults of Bellano; they explained the mystery of the confession. Ascanio, whom I had pursued from the rock, and seen plunging in the waters, bruised and mangled had crawled to a cavern on the shore. Fishermen, coasting along the isle, found him the next morning; and half through compassion, half through curiosity, brought him to their habitation, and tended him till his recovery, if it could be called so. While he lay in anguish on his bed of straw, he was visited, like many others, with that compunction which suffering produces. He determined to disburthen his con-

science of crimes that had only brought him misery, and still weak and suffering, contrived to return to Italy. Here his wounds exasperated by fatigue, and his mental anguish increased by the terrors of immediate death, his reason failed him, and escaping from his companions, he wandered a maniac in the forests of Apulia till nature was exhausted, and he expired in the cottage of a peasant, having made his confession in the short interval of recovered reason. This document I enclose; it will serve with others to identify my narrative. I hasten on.

“I have now but little to disclose, except the device which subdued Ippolito finally to my power. I assumed a lay disguise, and told a plausible tale to the principal inquisitor at Pozzoli. I informed him that a most direful suspicion brooded over the character of a cavalier of the Montorio family, who was at that time in Pozzoli, and of whom it became the
holy

holy office to take immediate cognizance. I informed him, that betrayed by accident into his subterranean haunts, I had observed there an inscription, of which a copy was extant in the cathedral church at Pozzoli (this was sufficiently true, for I had myself copied it as one of the decorations of our infernal scenery). I proposed, therefore, that he should be led by some unsuspected contrivance to the spot, where persons stationed for the purpose might note his emotions at the sight. To render it more striking, the characters were illuminated with vivid traces resembling blood. A number of gazers crowded to the spot, and his unequivocal tokens of amaze and consciousness were witnessed by many who were uninterested in observing and reporting them. The success of this expedient was decisive; he was immured in the Inquisition, where under the character of a person whose influence might lead him

to confession, I had uninterrupted access to him. To render him stationary was the great object, another was to exhaust his resistance by the weariness of solitude and perpetual persecution.

“ In the mean while my agents were busily employed in the discovery of Annibal, whom at length they traced, by means of his servant, to a wild hut in the windings of the wood. I communicated my information to the Count, who, in the rage of fear, commanded me immediately to seize and send them to the castle, where it was likely they would not be suffered to disturb him long. Of the fate of Ippolito he was perfectly careless. His injunctions, so far as they coincided with my own purposes, I resolved to adhere to, yet the discovery of Annibal’s movements was not easy. The ruffians I employed, though hardened in horrors, recoiled from visiting a haunt which was said to be the abode
of

of a departed spirit, and I was myself compelled to perform the parts of spy and tempter at once; in the former I believe I was detected by the loss of my cowl.

“ Meantime my persecution of Ippolito was suspended by a commotion of the earth, which demolishing the tower in which he was confined, liberated him. He made his escape on board a vessel which was crowded with fugitives for Sicily. The rage of the elements again threw him on the shore, where I stood anticipating the wreck of the vessel. I need not tell of his frenzied and convulsive submission to a power which he believed had controuled the elements. I led him to a retreat I had prepared, where he was soon joined by his brother, whose flight from the forest had been intercepted by ruffians I had provided, and a guide I had corrupted. I lamented his *escape* to the *Count*; the lady was carried to the castle.

“ Amid

“ Amid these horrors can it be believed that I feel compassion for the fate of this gentle, illfated woman ? The Count, on beholding her, felt a long extinguished passion for her mother revive. To gratify a romantic illusion of posthumous passion, she was arrayed in fantastic splendour by the Count, and to appease fear and jealousy, was poisoned by his wife.

I hasten on ; I seem to myself to cleave billows of blood, and push away, as I proceed, the red and weltering tides with either hand. I introduced my victims into the castle at night. The hour approached. The persecution that had depraved their reason, and blasted their existence, was no longer to be resisted. The hour, which nothing could retard or avert, approached rapidly. The Count, restless under the burden of added guilt, and augmented fear, (the blood of Ildefonsa, and the supposed flight of Annibal)

bal) had sent for me repeatedly in the course of that awful term ; to facilitate my purpose, and prepare him for its event, I enjoined him an hour of *solitary* penance. I was again sent for by the miserable man. Agitated by the suspension of my purpose, I was about to break from him when he called me back.

“ ‘ You are acquainted with my guilt,’ said he, “ but not with its palliations ; I have a secret reserve of expiation, a hold of hope and refuge for some years. Amid the mass of murders that stained our souls, we hesitated to shed the innocent blood of infancy. The children of my brother were discovered in the cottage where they had been conveyed by their faithful attendant from the massacre of their parents. They were discovered, but they were spared ; we purposed to rear them in obscurity and safety. All the *first children of my marriage*

marriage perished. Terrified at a calamity, which our smitten consciences interpreted as a judgment, and willing to purchase the security of our bloody honours by an act which was pleasant to the vacancy of natural love, we determined to rear the children of my brother, and to restore to them indirectly their lineal dignities. With the natural diffidence of villainy, I concealed this from Ascanio. I even in my letters acquainted him they were dead, but *Ippolito and Annibal are not my children, they are the orphans of my brother.*'

"I heard him; I heard all; *they were my own children*—my own children, whom I had persecuted, corrupted, destroyed, tempted to murder, plunged in infamy, hurried to death; *they were my own children!* The deed was yet undone; I flew to my children's feet to suspend it; I could not speak; I could not say—
'Hold! ye are my children.' I gasped,
I with-

I writhed, I howled in speechless agony, but I had not power to utter a sound of human language. They broke from me ; I fell senseless at their feet ; they rushed to the chamber of imaginary parricide. When I recovered my faculties, when I dragged my spent limbs after them, my *children were murderers !*

“ What their father had impelled them to, could now be neither prevented nor concealed. Worlds could not buy again the moment in which the blow was struck ; but worlds shall consume away before he who impelled, shall finish its expiation. I have now no words, no voice of supplications ; I cannot for my soul, whine, or beg, or bend like others ; all my powers are collected into one cry, deep and piercing, and exceeding bitter, ‘ spare my children ! ’

“ I do not adjure compassion, I appeal to justice. *They are not criminals, frenzy is not criminal.* Their intellects

were extinguished ; fatigue and sleeplessness, and visionary horrors, and all the train of devilish enginery that I had brought against them, had impaired the noblest frame of faculties that ever was abused by the wit or malice of devils. They are *not criminals* ; they were impelled beyond all power of human resistance ; the wisest and most upright of you that sit there to judge them, so wrought on and beset, would have been a maniac or a murderer. How often have I, with the passions of a demon, beheld them with astonishment ! How often have I admired the glorious struggles of their indignation, the convulsions of their virtue ! And *they were my children* ! And all good angels slept ! No monitory whisper, no inward shivering told me to pause ! Their innocence, their friendship, exclusive and strong, their distance and dissimilarity from all the children of my brother, struck me
with

no start of doubt, no thrill of conjecture!—No! no!

* * * * *

“ To be restored to my wife, my children, *myself* again, could not have bribed me to outlive this discovery ; but for *them*, and their vindication, I have done it. I intended to have gone off in the dark cloud of my purpose, mocking the wonder of mankind, and shrouding my retreat in the eternal train of shadowy fear and gloomy remembrance. But I am compelled to cast it off, and to stand bare and shrinking in the eye of mankind, I am compelled to say, I am the *miserable* Count of Montorio, the miserable husband, the most miserable of fathers. I am compelled to say this, but I will at least not say it like other men. No, I provoke, I solicit punishment. Bury me under manacles, macerate me with your tortures, let every
hour

hour bring more than the pangs of death, yet let me be many hours dying.

“ I feel my crimes deserve it ; I am a monster, beneath whom the earth groans. To one demon passion I have sacrificed the whole of existence ; in revenge I butchered Verdoni, in revenge I murdered my wife, in revenge I—Oh ! let me not say—I have destroyed my innocent sons. I have been sated with revenge, and let revenge be now sated on me.

“ Oh ! my sweet, noble boys ! Can it be nature that springs up in a heart so blasted as mine ? The thoughts of ye flow over its avenues so parched and flinty, like the first fall of Heaven’s dew on the desert, long waste and waterless ! Thoughts so new and dear, impulses so fresh, hopes like the first hours of vernal life, all must be extinguished ;—though my children are spared, they are not spared to their father ! Their miserable
father

father must not see them live ! Yet live, my children, though not for me.—I dare not, I *will not* think.—Oh ! let me not be sent from the world as I have lived in it, cursing and despairing !”

* * * * *

This paper enclosed the confession of Ascanio and other, and equally valid documents of consequence. It was read with astonishment, but could neither be disputed nor distrusted. The Court sat late, but as almost every point of inquiry had been anticipated by the Count's memorial, they sat rather to indulge their amazement in copious debate. It was resolved, however, immediately to secure the person of the Countess, to take possession of the estates and castle of the family in the name of the King, and to summon from the Abruzzo, a woman named Teresa Zanetti, sister to the attendant of the Countess Erminia ; but she had anticipated the summons of the Court.

Court. She had heard, though imperfectly, of the direful events in the Montorio family, and ascribing them with the prompt application of guilt, to the secret she had so iniquitously preserved, she hasted to Naples, to make a confession while yet she had the power of making it *voluntarily*. Her testimony was full and clear; she related that on the night of the Countess Erminia's death, her sister, Hesperia Zanetti, pale and distracted, had rushed into her cottage, in a forest, a few miles from Muralto; that she had scarce breath to hint that her lady had perished by violence, and to implore shelter and safety for the two children she bore in her arms, when exhausted by fatigue and strong emotion she expired. Teresa amazed and terrified, yet forbore to take any measure for the preservation of the children, till Ascanio tracing the flight of the too faithful

faithful Hesperia, discovered them in Teresa's cottage. Whether his employers were weary of carnage, or averse from the murder of infants, his instructions were to spare the children, but to secure the secrecy of the woman. This was too easily effected ; the woman dreaded their vengeance and coveted their gold ; and when, some years afterwards, the children were substituted for two sons of the Count who had lately died, she conceived the restoration to their paternal honours was an abundant compensation for the concealment of their real parentage.

This awful history of human passions was now fully unfolded ; had a witness of higher dignity been required, the Duke di Pallerini, (whose unsuccessful charge had been owing to the strictness of his honour, and had drawn on him the displeasure of his sovereign,) was

was now discharged from his obligation to secrecy, and was ready to attest that he had recognized Orazio Count of Montorio in the Confessor Schemoli.

CHAP. XXIV.

—The same
 That from your first of difference and decay
 Hath followed your sad steps——
 'Twas no one else, all's cheerless, dark and deadly.

LEAR.

Te teneam moriens deficiente manu. TIBULLUS.

And thy dear hand with dying ardour press.

GRAINGER.

OVER a train of events so momentous, so complicated, so mysterious, the judicial Court paused in total perplexity of judgment, in wonder which excluded decision. There was no precedent to direct them, no prescribed rule to apply

to

to such an emergency, indignation was distracted by a diversity of depravity, and justice suspended by unresisted compassion.

At first, the guilt was so obvious and enormous, that a sentence of unqualified severity was pronounced against all the criminals. At this dreadful intelligence the families of Amaldi and Alberotti, accompanied by the most distinguished of the nobility, hastened to the palace, and throwing themselves at the feet of the King, implored him not to bury in ruin and disgrace, a family whose high and extensive connections would diffuse mourning and consternation through Italy. Even the family of Verdoni generously pleaded for its enemy, and the Court was required to revise its sentence.

Ippolito and Annibal waked from their horrible dream, and found themselves murderers without the vindication of resistless

sistless necessity, or the authority of divine commission. They were soon acquainted with the real agent and cause of their crime, and the diminished burthen of *parricide* was the first impulse that gave motion or relief to their stupid and stagnated dejection.

They sunk on their knees in gratitude. Before this period they had neither spoken nor moved, since their entrance within the walls of St. Elmo, except when the officers searching Annibal, found and attempted to take from him the picture of Ildefonsa, then he shrieked fearfully, and his convulsive resistance became so furious, that they were compelled to release it; from that moment he sat in the same posture, grasping it firmly with one hand, but apparently unconscious of what he held.

Ippolito emerged into reason first; the officers of the prison, to whom the general impulse of strong compassion extended,
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ed, permitted the brothers to meet without witnesses, or any of the vexatious restraints of confinements. On their first meeting, Ippolito's tears dropped on a vacant and insensible countenance; but in a short time Annibal appeared sensible of some pleasure from his brother's presence, and held out the hand of silent kindness on his departure; and at length, though slowly, recovered his faculties uninjured.

They were constantly together; fraternal fondness brightened even the gloom of a prison and the terrors of guilt; but they had many dark hours. Annibal, ruined in love as well as in hope and existence, was the more dejected of the two, and the soothing remembrances of passion were darkened by the imminent horrors of *incest*. He had stronger motives, *moral* motives for his depression than Ippolito; the latter had consented to guilt in a convulsion of passion, the former

former from a conviction of reason, of reason, though perverted, strongly exerted. Ippolito, therefore, for the perpetration of the crime felt only ordinary compunction, while Annibal's was mingled with a kind of gloomy disappointment, that the supposed agent of heaven was only the victim of a monstrous illusion.

“ It was in one of those dreary conferences that melancholy seeks her solace and her food from, that the door of the apartment was thrown open, and a form glided in, so faint, so fragile, so hardly visible, that while Ippolito clasped it in his arms, he almost doubted the evidence of his touch. It was the face of Cyprian, but the form of a woman. “ I am no longer Cyprian,” it murmured; “ Cyprian was the guardian of your innocence, but for him there is no longer any employment: let me assume my original name and form, they are disastrous, and therefore are better suited to this hour.

I am

I am *Rosolia di Valozzi*, who loved you, who lived for you, whose last proof of most unhappy love is to die with you!"

Ippolito wondered and believed. He held to his heart that rare and wonderful woman, who disguising her sex and hazarding her life, had quitted the convent where, in the anguish of love contending with religion, she had assumed the veil, and entering into the family of Montorio, in the page had sustained the sufferings, without the hope, of love; had devoted herself to the amelioration of Ippolito's mind and character, without the solace of being even known to him; and now that all effort was fruitless, and all hope extinct, came, amid the horrors of a prison and the certainty of her own direful punishment, to obey the last impulse of love that was "strong as death." In penitence for her apostacy, she had resolved to pursue her arduous task, uncheered by the gratitude, unrepaid by
the

the affection of him for whom she toiled, and watched, and wept. She resolved never to disclose her sex or her name, or violate the purity of a vestal passion, by subsisting it on the grosser food of earthly love. She lived unknown, she wept unpitied, she loved unrequited.

“The only indulgence I allowed myself,” said she, “was sometimes to read to you fragments that described the life and passion of a votarist of unhappy love. They *were my own*; she whom I described as thus loving, and thus suffering, was myself. I could not refuse myself the compassion you sometimes gave to sufferings, of which the victim was so near and yet unknown; I loved to feed sick fancy with sounds that could no longer excite guilty hope, or flatter desire; I loved to hear myself bewailed as dead, and triumph in the sad resolution that sought only the solace of vain and posthumous pity.”

Annibal

Annibal now recognizing Rosolia, asked an explanation of that mysterious night when she wept over the picture of Ildefonsa, but could not disclose the fate of the original? “Ildefonsa and I,” said Rosolia, “were educated in the same convent; melancholy and enthusiasm endeared us to each other; she was the confidant of my fatal love, she was the assistant of my escape. When I saw *you* worshipping her picture, I endeavoured to dissuade you from searching for her, for I believed by that time she had assumed the veil, and that your search was hopeless.”—“Would it had been so!” said Annibal retiring, but grasping the picture still. “But *we*, my love,” said Rosolia, “we must have done with softer thoughts; that time is gone by; we are for the dark hour, for the valley of the shadow of death! Oh! if beyond that misty vacancy that spreads before us, some bright and peculiar world, some
unearthly

uneearthly tract should be disclosed, where no obstructions cold and dark shall mar the passion of immortals, where it will be no crime to love!"—"Alas, my love!" said Ippolito, "are these dreams of bliss for a murderer?"—"Or for an apostate!" shrieked Rosolia. "Oh! I have gone too far." They wept in each other's arms. "I thought my last moment of weakness was past," said Rosolia; "Oh! I feel they will never cease while I gaze on you. Might I dare to say it; surely I would say I have loved thee with an immortal love; anguish, and fear, and disappointment, the death of love, it bore them all, it mocked at calamity, and it survives in death. Ippolito! Oh, Ippolito!" she cried, drowned in the luxury of sorrowful passion, "Oh, how I love you at this moment!"—"But shall we indeed meet again, Rosolia?" said the sad Ippolito, "shall we see each other with these eyes? shall I behold

you in that form again, and know it, Rosolia, or rather Cyprian, my better angel, my little benignant guardian, shall I know you in those bright worlds where all are so like what you would have been to me?"—"Oh! those words recal me," said Rosolia, "these hours demand other thoughts, high, and solemn, and unearthly. Kneel with me, my beloved, we are for the dark and awful conflict of the soul, for the depths of prostration and the strife of prayer! Kneel with me, my beloved! I feel my strength will just support me till your pardon is assured by penitence, and your spirit is free as those that have never erred."

They were about to kneel, and Annibal knelt too in his solitary recess, still holding to his wasted heart the picture of Ildefonsa, when Ippolito starting, caught Rosolia to his heart, and held her long and fervently.

"Let me," said he, "give this moment,

ment, this one moment to human thought, this one tear to human remembrance! Oh, Cyprian! Cyprian! think of those times when happy and innocent"—(his voice was lost.) "Oh! think of something unutterably fond and soft for this one moment, think of all that is rising in my heart this moment, think *human* thoughts, and melt with me in human sorrow, my love! my faithful love! my fond, dying love!" he repeated, mingling the tears and kisses of rapture and anguish, too sweet and bitter for words. The vestal struggled in vain with the madness of the moment. They remained locked in wild and speechless fondness. Annibal, lost in prayer, dared not to look on them: he could not look on the picture.

At this moment the doors of the apartment unfolded, and the officer who presided over that tower of the prison where the brothers were confined, entered with

the air of a man who is rejoiced to communicate joy, and announced the altered sentence of the court. Ippolito and Annibal were pardoned, but required to leave Italy for ever. Orazio, Count of Montorio, was doomed to death; the estates, the castles, and the palaces of the family were confiscated, the title extinguished and erased from the list of nobility, and the name forbidden to be revived or borne within the territories of Naples.

“ But *his* life is spared !” cried Rosolia, sinking at Ippolito’s feet. She was raised but to linger for a few days of resigned misery; the shock of sudden joy had been finally fatal to a frame worn to a shadow with strong emotion, and trembling with precarious existence. During this interval, she mentioned the harmless advantage she had taken of Ippolito’s visionary temper in her introduction to him; it was her face that he beheld in
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the glass, when drawing off her mask, she looked over his shoulder. It was she, too, who alarmed by his language at Naples, had sent the officers of justice to Muralto, not to apprehend, but to protect him from a danger she could not define. But these, and all other subjects of temporal consideration, vanished as her dying hour drew nigh; it drew nigh with darkness and doubt, her religious impressions awoke, and she dreaded that her mortal love had carried her too far. Yet still she clung to the sight and image of Ippolito, and when she could no longer see, she extended her cold hand to him, even when she was no longer sensible of the pressure; her lips still endeavoured to murmur his name, till sense, and thought, and life were extinguished, and the victim of love was no more!

* * * * *

There was a different death-bed scene exhibited at the castle of Muralto. The

officers of justice, with decent reluctance, proceeded to announce the demolition of the honours, the name, and the wealth of the house of Montorio to its surviving representaive. They were ushered into the sumptuous chamber, where, amid her family who wept, her physicians who consulted, and priests who prayed, the Countess lay extended on her bed, with death in her face, and a stern tranquillity on her brow.

The officers, with many pauses, pronounced the sentence of the law. The Countess was silent. “Madonna,” said her confessor, “do you hear what the officers of justice have pronounced?”—“Who is it that addresses me?” said the Countess. “It is your confessor,” said the priest. “Has he forgotten that the Countess of Montorio will be addressed by no other title?” said she with a haughtiness of tone that contended with death. “That title, Lady, is no longer yours,” said

said one of the officers. "What does he say?" said the Countess faintly. "He tells you the truth," said the confessor with energy. "Lady, it is a solemn hour; I adjure you to recal your thoughts, and meditate rather your peace with heaven."—"Your wealth and estates are confiscated," said a harsh and ignorant priest; "your palaces and your pomp are levelled with the dust; your—" "And our *name*, our *title*," said the Countess. There was a deep silence. "The name, the title of Montorio," she repeated, suddenly rising from her pillow, her eyes darting fire, and her voice thrilling with the energy of passion. "They are extinguished for ever," said one of the attendants. The Countess fell back on the bed; her face was concealed, but a convulsed and broken sound murmuring through the stillness of the chamber, announced the awful dissolution of guilty ambition.

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Since

Since the hour of his confinement, the Count Montorio had been allowed no remission, no indulgence. He had required none; when the attendants entered his apartment, they found him engaged in writing so deeply that he never raised his head, or seemed sensible of their presence. From the time it was finished, he appeared restless and agitated, but still silent. The sentinel who watched at his door heard him pace his chamber all night; but from the time that the final sentence of the court was known, he became profoundly still.

His only request was to see his sons, and this was urged with such earnest and unceasing vehemence, that at length it was accorded. The night previous to that appointed for his death, his sons were conducted to his apartment. The scene was solemn. The dark habits, the clank of chains, the heavy tread of the armed sentinels, the cheerless and funereal

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real light of the torches, the rush of sudden motion breaking on the silence of night and a prison, and *that* hushed again, hushed by the pause of breathless passion that followed, were impressed forever on the minds of the witnesses.

The children knelt to ask a blessing of their father, the wretched father knelt to ask forgiveness of his children. Some of the attendants wept aloud, and the sternest turned aside and veiled their faces.

During an interval of two hours not a coherent sentence was uttered, all were cries of mingled anguish, and sentences broken by bursts; the sorrow of late and unavailing recognition lost in the deeper distress of inevitable separation. Orazio lacerated the feelings of his children by perpetual prostrations, and the harrowing spectacle of paternal humiliation; these, when they could not prevent, they partook, and sunk together
with

with him on the ground, from which he could not be raised. As the hour of separation, prolonged by cruel indulgence, arrived, the distress grew more terrible ; he would not be torn from his boys, on whom he called as he alternately embraced them in every sound in the compass of distress, from the smothered, tremulous murmur that is lost in sobs, to the ceaseless, shapeless, maniac yell of misery, that stuns the ear, and hears nothing but its own despair. The attendants faltering approached. With the shriek and grasp of a mother, he held his children to his breast, folding his mantle, and bending over them with the unconscious provision of fear.

The sons, as they yet clung to the embraces of death, felt themselves bathed in their father's blood ! They recoiled ; his agony had burst one of the larger vessels, and the blood gushed from his mouth in torrents. The prisoners were removed,

removed, the medical attendants of the prison were summoned, and the monks who assist and exhort the criminals hastened to the chamber of the dying man. Ippolito and Annibal knelt at the door ; his broken and blood-stifled groans were fearful. They stopt their ears, and turned their asking faces to the attendants, who, horror-smote and dumb, quitted the apartment every moment. At length a priest who crossed himself came forth to order the bells of St. Elmo to toll, while he proceeded to the chapel to read the prayers for those who are in the agonies of death. The brothers grasped his habit, but they could not speak. “ Release me,” said the monk, “ I would pray ; I have beheld a sight which has left me no power but of prayer.” They held him still. “ When all is over,” said he, moving from them, “ you will hear the toll of a bell that announces the sufferer for

for whom we pray is no more." They listened; all was still for a moment.

* * * * *

A low and general murmur broke from the chamber of death. The bell tolled; the brothers prostrated themselves, and prayed for the departing soul. The attendants passed out. "Did you hear the last words he uttered?" said the governor of St. Elmo to the principal confessor. "I could not hear his confession," said the priest. "It was no confession," said the governor; "the words were, 'The last of the Montorios has not perished on a scaffold.'"

* * * * *

"Such," said the narrator, "was the fall of the Montorio family, in whose fall the dispensation of a higher hand is visible to the most weak and limited eye. He who sought his own elevation, and the aggrandizement of his children, was defeated and destroyed by him whom he had

had

had sacrificed to his ambitious wickedness. He who sought vengeance as atrocious as the crime that provoked it, found it poured out on his own children; and they who desired the knowledge of things concealed from man, found their pursuit accompanied by guilt, and terminated by misery and punishment.

“Of the rest of the family there is little to be known; the daughters entered into convents, and the sons into foreign service under assumed names; but the unhappy men whose story I have related, were every where distinguished by their silent bravery, their solemn melancholy, their lovely affection for each other, and their reluctance to the society of women.”

FINIS.



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